

TWENTY-SIX
SERMONS
ON
Various Subjects,
IN
TWO VOLUMES.

BY
ADAM BATTY, A. M.
Late Rector of *St. John's, Clerkenwell*,
AND
Lecturer of *St. Dunstan's* in the West.



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in *Fleet-street* ; *F. GYLES*, in *Holborn* ;
W. INNYS and *R. MANBY*, in *St. Paul's*
Church-yard ; and *G. STRAHAN*, in *Cornhill*.

M DCC XXXIX.

TWENTY SIX

S. E. R. M. O. N. S.

ON

Various Subjects

IN

TWO VOLUMES

BY

ADAM BATTY



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M. DCC. LXXI.

THIRTEEN
SERMONS
ON
Various Subjects.

BY
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Lecturer of *S^t. Dunstan's in the West.*

VOL. I.



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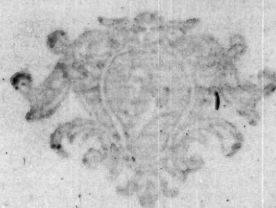
M DCC XXXIX.

SEVENTEEN
SERMONS
ON
Various Subjects.

BY
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Late Rector of St. John's Church, Newell,
AND
Rector of St. Dunstan's in the West.



I.



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MDCCLXXIX.



THE
CONTENTS
OF EACH
SERMON

In the FIRST VOLUME.

SERMON I, II.

The Inspiration of Scripture.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

*ALL Scripture is given by Inspiration
of God, and is profitable for Re-
proof, for Correction, for Instruction
in Righteousness ;*

*That the Man of God may be thoroughly
perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all
good Works.* Pag. 1, to 47

S E R M O N III.

The Joy of a good Christian.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

*Rejoice in the Lord always ; and again I
say rejoice.* P. 47

S E R M O N IV.

*The Bounty of Providence displayed in the Fruitfulness of the
Earth.*

PSALM lxxv. ii.

*Thou crownest the Year with thy Goodness,
and thy Paths drop Fatness.* p. 71

SERMON

CONTENTS. vii

S E R M O N V.

The comparative Virtue of believing with, or without, sensible Proof.

JOHN xx. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

pag. 91

S E R M O N VI.

Our Duty enforced from God's Omniscience.

HEBREWS iv. 13.

All Things are naked and open unto the Eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

p. 115

S E R M O N

SERMON VII.

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

EPHESIANS iv. 8.

— Gave Gifts unto Men. pag. 135

SERMON VIII, IX, X.

The Evil of corrupt Communica-
tion.

EPHESIANS iv. 29.

*Let no corrupt Communication proceed
out of your Mouth; but that which is
good for the Use of Edifying, that it
may minister Grace unto the Hearers.*

P. 159

SERMON

CONTENTS. ix

S E R M O N XI.

The Shamefulness of Sin an Argument for Repentance.

ROMANS vi. 21.

What Fruit had ye then in those Things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the End of those Things is Death. pag. 227

S E R M O N XII.

The Wisdom of being Religious.

J O B xxviii. 28.

And unto Man He said; the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, is Understanding.

P. 253

VOL. I.

b

SERMON



x CONTENTS.

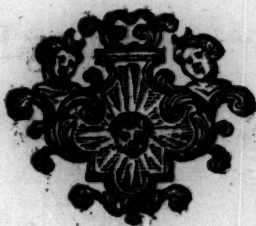
S E R M O N XIII.

Christ's Ascension and Intercession.

HEBREWS ix. 24.

For Christ is not entered into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the Truth ; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us.

p. 277.



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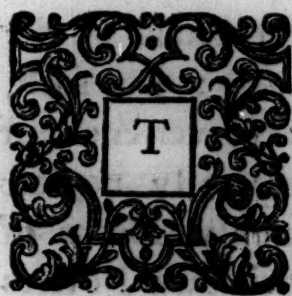
S E R M O N I.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.



HERE is nothing gives a Man greater Pleasure, and inspires him with firmer Constancy in the prosecution of any Affair, than the assurance of his having laid a true Foundation, and acting upon right Principles ; because this en-

ables him to press forwards with Certainty, and makes him entire Master of himself and Circumstances in every Part of his Procedure : But such an Assurance as this is particularly serviceable in Sacred Matters ; because the infinite Importance of Religion infers the Necessity of the strictest Caution in every Step we take ; and renders every Degree of Certainty we can arrive at concerning it, as it is more eminently useful, so likewise more satisfactory.

HERE then we see the wonderful Goodness of Almighty God, in that He hath so fully and clearly revealed in his Holy Word whatever is to be known and practised by us, that no one can fatally mistake in the Paths of Righteousness but by his own Default ; no one, except wilfully, need be ignorant or uncertain in the Way that leads to Happiness : But such, on the contrary, is the Perverseness of Mankind, that they frequently neglect and decry this sure, this only, Means of Salvation ; and set up their own Devices in opposition to what the Almighty hath estab-

established for the certain Guidance to bring them to Heaven.

MEN of this Character ; Men who *resist the Truth, Seducers, deceiving, and being deceived*, the Apostle is largely animadverting upon in the Chapter of which our Text is a Part, and gives it in charge to *Timothy*, that he wou'd *continue in those things which he had learned and was assured of*, i. e. that he wou'd not fall into the innovating Spirit of those Times, but adhere stedfastly to that Form of sound Words which he had already receiv'd ; those pure and well-establish'd Doctrines which had been delivered to him under Terms of all possible Assurance. This Charge the Apostle enforces by two Motives, *viz.* the Manner of his having been instructed ; and the Nature of the Instruction he had receiv'd ; *Continue in those things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of ; knowing of whom thou hast learned them.* St. Paul himself had been his Instructor ; and *Timothy* cou'd not but know him to be a true Apostle of Christ : Again *Timothy* had been well-principled from his Youth in Scrip-

tural Knowledge ; *from a Child, saith the Apostle, thou hast known the Scriptures ; which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* A Departure therefore from the good Instructions which he had so early and, consequently, so intimately imbibed, wou'd in him be much more inexcusable. The Nature of the Instruction he had receiv'd is fully set forth in the Words before us :

In order to treat of which more particularly, it may be proper barely to observe,

THAT as the Holy Scripture is the Foundation of true Religion ; so it always shares the same Fate with it : the same Adversaries set themselves to oppose both ; and they always oppose them both in the same manner. The Profane, for instance, who are Enemies to all Religion in general, labour to undermine it, by denying the Divine Authority of the Scriptures ; the Superstitious, who lay so much stress upon the Form of Godliness, as to neglect the Power of it ; and the Enthusiasts, who wou'd fondly resolve the Whole of Religion into Vapour and Imagination, do both of them endeavour to decry the Sufficiency

ficiency of the Holy Scriptures ; the former, by *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men* ; the latter, by imposing their own delusive Dreams for immediate Revelation from the Almighty.

WE cannot therefore do greater service to Religion than by establishing the Holy Scriptures upon that foot of Certainty and Excellency which are required to make them a sufficient Revelation of God's Will to Mankind ; and this the Words of the Text will furnish out Matter for, by pointing out to us,

I. THE Divine Authority of those sacred Writings in these Words, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.*

II. THEIR Usefulness in these Words, *They are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

III. And Lastly, THEIR Sufficiency in these Words, *That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.*

1. THEN the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures is pointed out to us in these Words ; *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.*

THAT there is a God, and that God is to be worshipped, are Principles which in clearing up this Article must be taken for granted ; and then it is a most necessary Inference, That He must be worship'd in such a Way as is most agreeable to his Nature and Will. Now it is very notorious, that Man is of himself unable to form any regular System of Divine Worship ; for if we would certainly know the Power of Human Faculties in this respect, we must form our Judgment of them from the Discoveries which were made in Religious Matters during the Times of Paganism. There were among the Heathen, Men of equal Abilities, Application and Integrity to any that have ever appear'd in Life ; who labour'd, by searching to find out God, but cou'd not find him out to any tolerable degree of Perfection.

TRUE indeed it is, we can now by many conclusive Chains of Reasoning carry up Things to the first Cause ; and represent the Almighty under Characters more worthy so glorious a Being ; but then the Light vouchsafed by the Holy Scriptures it is, that hath enlarged our Views and directed them aright ; hath given our Thoughts a free Scope ; hath presented many new and bright Objects to our Understanding ; and in all respects hath increased our Knowledge and Capacity of Improvement in Religious Truths. It is therefore very unfair, to magnify the present Strength of Human Reason, in prejudice to Divine Revelation, because from Revelation, such its Strength was derived unto it ; and in this respect likewise it is that the *Light of the Gospel shineth in darkness, although the darkness comprehendeth it not.* Now if we have receiv'd, as the Apostle argues upon another occasion, *Wherefore do we boast, as though we had not received ?* And to employ what we have receiv'd against that from which we did receive it, is the same profane piece of Ingratitude,

gratitude, as the robbing the Temple by the Light which the Altar affords us.

IF unassisted Nature cou'd have struck out any significant Discoveries in Religion, the Heathen World wou'd certainly have produced them : But it is pitiable to observe, that after their laboured Searches and Researches, they were never able to come to any thing certain and conclusive about it ; and that the Whole of their Divine Knowledge was full of Error, Darknes and Perplexity : This was the Case even of those who were endued with the most enlighten'd Minds, and the most exalted Apprehensions of Things : But if we consider the Divinity which commonly prevail'd among them ; the many impious Fooleries, with which they debased the Nature ; the many carnal Absurdities, wherewith they profaned the Worship of the Deity, give us a mean and shocking Prospect of mere Natural Reason, and necessarily bring us to this Conclusion, That Man does absolutely want some express Revelation of God's Will, in order to worship him in an acceptable Manner.

It may be observ'd here that God did never indeed leave himself entirely without Witness : The Works of the Creation, and the Goodness of Providence are so far sufficient to declare his Glories, that they will render obstinate Offenders without excuse ; but they are not able to *make us wise unto Salvation* ; because many Truths which are necessary to Salvation, could never be discover'd this way ; and whatever Truths are thus discover'd, are, at the best, discover'd but very imperfectly.

FARTHER yet ; The same Reason which shews the Necessity of an express Revelation in general, holds equally strong for a written one ; because the same Corruptions of our Nature, which prevent the Light of Reason shining forth in its full Strength and Clearness, wou'd likewise soon extinguish the Light of Revelation, unless it was made, by some means or other, permanent and perpetual ; and that can be done only, as we know of, three Ways ; by continual fresh Communications with the Almighty ; by Tradition ; or by Writing. Now such immediate Communications with the Almighty, if they

they were held by every particular Person, wou'd require a continual unnecessary working of Miracles ; because all those Communications are miraculous : If they were intended to over-rule our Wills, they wou'd destroy the Freedom of them ; if they were intended only to enlighten our Understandings, that might sufficiently be done in another and more simple manner ; if such Communications were held only with some particular Persons, they wou'd lay Mankind open to wonderful Delusions ; many false Prophets wou'd be continually arising, who wou'd deceive many ; Enthusiasm wou'd swallow up every thing of solid Virtue ; every sanguine Innovator would set up for an inspired Preacher of Righteousness, and confound the World with their Instructions so much, as to leave the Way to Happiness even more uncertain than if there was no Revelation at all. Again, Tradition is of all other the most impure and uncertain Conveyance of Truth ; in the Affairs of common Life, Matters of Fact, by being carried only through a few hands, will be so diversified, that they would not be known again to
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their original Relater ; but in Religious Matters, our Corruptions interpose much more powerfully to cloud those Circumstances which appear any ways obscure ; to suppress or vary those Doctrines, which are at all distastful ; and to add or enlarge upon those which are more agreeable. As Revelation must in this Case pass thro' numberless different Channels ; and as those Channels are all of them impure, it will receive a different Tincture of Corruption from them all ; so that instead of bringing Truth to us, this Conveyance will itself be found an inexhaustible Source of Error.

A WRITTEN Revelation therefore can alone answer the Ends of any Revelation at all ; because this alone is an universal, permanent, and certain Means of receiving Divine Instruction. It is universal, because hereby the Notices of God's Will may be most readily and fully promulged ; it is permanent, because it cannot be obliterated or varied by the Artifice of wicked Men ; it is certain, because any Collusion might more easily be discovered in this Way : Writings we may view or re-view

view at pleasure ; we may take them in all Lights ; compare them together in every Particular ; consider their Natures, their Proofs, their Tendency more frequently and minutely, and in every Circumstance we may examine them with the utmost accuracy ; and whatever will bear this Scrutiny must needs be infallibly certain.

Now from the extream Necessity there is of such a Revelation as this, and from God's known Goodness, to furnish out to all his Creatures whatever is needful to their Happiness, we might absolutely infer, that there actually is such a Revelation ; but the only Use we need make of these Premises is to declare, that it is at least highly reasonable to believe there may be such an one ; and to engage those, if any such there be, who are not yet perswaded of this Truth, to desire that it may be so ; and to look out after it with Diligence and Impartiality, *if haply they may find it.* For shall the Almighty be less gracious and indulgent in the most important Points relating to our Happiness, than those which are inferior and subordinate ?

nate ? Shall He give us Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, and Hands to handle earthly Objects ; and shall He not much rather give us sufficient and suitable Notices with respect to Heavenly Objects ? Shall He give us Understandings to distinguish, and Wills to choose, and Affections to pursue the Things which relate to our present Interest ; and shall He with-hold from us the necessary Means of knowing and pursuing the Things which belong to our eternal Welfare ? Shall Mankind be the only Species here below, which is created with a Capacity of worshipping God ; and shall the proper Methods, whereby the Almighty should be worship'd, be hidden from their Eyes ? Shall God prepare infinite Blessings for those who do his Will ; and shall He declare his Will to them in such faint and imperfect Characters, as to render it almost as uncertain and defective as tho' no Declaration at all was made ? What is this other than to leave the Affairs of Man's Salvation entirely at random ; and to make our Arrival at Heaven as great a Contingency, as the Uncertainty of Men's Humours, and the Hazards

Hazards of worldly Temptations can possibly produce ? It is unworthy, it is profane, to conceive of the Almighty in this manner : He hath certainly, He must have given an express Revelation of his Will to Mankind, and that a written one ; because otherwise He would not seem to have consider'd the Circumstances of weak and corrupted Men ; and to approve himself our gracious Rewarder.

To proceed now in our Argument. The Writings, which we call the Scriptures, offer themselves to us under this Character : They are propos'd to us, as the Words of the Text express, for Writings *given by Inspiration of God* ; or, as St. Peter saith, *they are declared to be what holy Men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* ; and how far they come up to this Character, it is our Business now to enquire.

THE Notion we have of Divine Inspiration is this, That it hath pleas'd the Almighty, by the extraordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit, to apply so fully and intimately to the Souls of some Men, as to give them an infallible Assurance of whatever He thinks fit to reveal, and to enable

enable them to convey an infallible Assurance of it to others. This is certainly what God may do, and may do under whatever Circumstances He pleases : He may give them a Mouth and a Pen as well as Wisdom ; so that when they declare those Divine Revelations, they may speak and write the Language of Divinity itself : Or He may only heighten their Natural Abilities, so that they may speak and write in their own Style ; yet so, that infallible Truths alone shall come from them ; and that Truth cloath'd in such Language as is not unbecoming the Excellency and Importance of it : He may give them likewise his Spirit when, and in what measure, He pleases : He may speak by them to Mankind at *sundry times and divers manners* ; may communicate with them more frequently, or more sparingly ; more intimately, or more remotely ; more minutely, or more generally ; and under these, or any of these Circumstances, their Revelations will nevertheless be Divine ; and the Doctrines they declare, infallibly the Word of God. Now that the Holy Scriptures were thus Divinely

vinely inspired ; *i. e.* that they had God for their Author, (however Men were made the Instruments of their conveyance) will appear from the following Arguments.

I. PROPHECIES are an evident Mark of Divinity, and great Part of the Holy Scriptures turn upon Prophecies ; when Matters of Facts are foretold at a great distance of Time, before they are transacted ; when many particular Circumstances are mentioned, and those very contingent ones, which Human Foresight could have no reason to conjecture, and Human Policy could not possibly contrive to take effect ; when a continued succession of such Predictions is made by different Persons, all perhaps declaring different Circumstances, but all agreeing in the main Point ; and when all these meet with their entire Completion, according to the Substance, the Manner, the Time predicted, what is this other than the Wisdom and Knowledge of God ? But in the Holy Scriptures we find abundance of Prophecy and Completion ; in-
 somuch, that when we read any Part of
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it, we might justly enquire, Do we read the Prediction of what shall be, or the History of what hath been? We do both; for one is the Counter-part to the other.

2. MIRACLES are another Mark of Divinity; they have always been esteem'd Proofs of Mission; and Pretences to Divine Inspiration have ever been accompanied with Pretences to working of Miracles: To produce Effects above human Abilities, and the known Powers of Nature, must require an Agency superior to that of mere Man, when such Works are produced in Confirmation of Doctrines which are worthy the Divine Being to promulge; they give those Doctrines a Divine Sanction: Miracles indeed have been wrought by wicked Spirits for the Confirmation of Falshood; but then the Doctrines they were design'd to establish, always discover the Imposture. Common Reason can distinguish whether Doctrines have a good or a bad Tendency; if they have a good one, then the ready Proof of Miracles will declare their Divine Origin: And this is the Case of the Holy Scriptures; therein are contain'd Doctrines

highly worthy the Almighty to reveal ; and the Words of those who preached those Doctrines, were all along confirm'd by Signs following.

3. ANOTHER Argument to prove the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, is the concurrent Testimony of all Ages. A well attested History, is as strong an Evidence of Truth, as Things declared and transacted at a distance, are capable of receiving ; and in Human Affairs it never fails of its Weight and Credit : In like manner it hath pleased the Almighty, to vouchsafe us the same sort of Evidence in Sacred Matters, as we think sufficient in common Life : It can be as well prov'd, as Human Testimony can prove any thing, that the Books of the Holy Scriptures were written by the Authors whose Name they bear ; at the Times when ; and with the Circumstances, under which they are supposed to be written ; That the Facts recorded in them were true ; That the Writers bore the Marks of Divine Mission ; That they were reputed inspired Writers by those among whom they lived ; That their Works were immediately receiv'd
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into the Canon of Scripture ; and have been handed down to us thro' intermediate Ages, with all possible Fidelity and Exactness.

THESE Arguments of Prophecies, Miracles, and Human Testimony, may be call'd external Arguments ; because they do not immediately arise from the Substance of the Scriptures themselves ; and from these Arguments we must conclude, that if there be Faith in Man, if there be Power and Wisdom in God, they all concur to evince the Divine Authority of those Sacred Writings.

4. The Substance of them does likewise most powerfully, and affectingly conclude for their Heavenly Origin.

THE Excellency of these Sacred Writings will indeed more particularly fall in with the two other Heads we proposed to treat of from these Words, *viz.* The Usefulness and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. But it may here be mention'd, that those bright and exalted Truths which are there declared, Those glorious Hopes of Eternal Happiness with which they enrich those enlivening Sentiments of Vir-

tue and Holiness with which they inspire us ; That admirable Harmony and Connection which run thro' the Whole ; tho' the Parts were composed by different Persons, at different Times, and on different Occasions, are all of them pregnant Proofs, that, however they are the Writings of Men, they are nevertheless the Dictates of God himself. Time would fail us, were we distinctly to mention their unaffected Simplicity of Narration ; their majestick Plainness of Stile ; their piercing Force of Instruction, they being quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword ; their heavenly Weight of Doctrine ; their lovely System of Faith and Holiness ; the blessed Tendencies they have to promote God's Glory and Man's Happiness ; the Awe and Veneration they impress on their very Adversaries ; the bright Influences they have on the Lives of those who obey the Precepts of them : These and numberless other Instances of this sort, are such strong and affecting Indications of Heavenly Truth, such clear and direct Stroaks of Divinity itself, as put them, not only above the Suspicion
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of Falshood, but likewise above the Possibility of human Invention and Composition.

BUT the two other Heads of Discourse will allow us to insist upon these Articles more particularly. From what has been said, I would briefly make this one Remark, *viz.* That the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, should engage us to conceive and treat of those Sacred Writings, under Terms of the greatest Regard and Deference. The Prophane indeed themselves are ready enough to acknowledge them to be useful Writings, inasmuch as they prescribe to Mankind the most pure and perfect Lessons of Holy Living ; but this is a Concession we are in no wise to be contented with, especially since we can so fully and manifestly trace up their Heavenly Origin ; for take away the Notion of their being divinely inspired, and they immediately lose all their Obligations ; Let the Instructions therein contain'd, be never so wisely calculated, they will come upon us without any Force and Authority, and the Obser-

vance or Neglect of them will become Matter of entire Indifferency ; nay, take away the Notion of their being divinely inspir'd, and they will not only fall below the Character of good and useful Writings, but must be universally esteem'd the most wicked and gross Imposture that was ever put upon Mankind : To ascribe to the Almighty a Piece of mere human Composition, to counterfeit the Seals of Heavenly Mission, and to usurp the Marks of Divine Authority, are Acts of Blasphemy, which would fix a Brand of Abomination and Abhorrence upon the Instruments of such Collusion and Profaneness, let the Substance of the Writings themselves, be never so excellent. So that in treating with our Adversaries upon this Article, tho' the Substance of the Holy Scriptures be one boasted Argument of their Worth and Excellency ; yet we ought, as little as possible, to take them in any View separate from their Divine Authority ; because that stamps a Dignity upon them, which must confound all Gainfayers, and raise in the Mind of serious

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ous Readers the most collected Attention,
the most fervent Application of Soul to-
wards the Truths therein contain'd ; the
most devout and joyful Sentiments of
Gratitude and Duty towards the Author
of them, God blessed for ever.



and the most collected American
the most recent collection of 2. 1810
which the Library of Congress has
received from the British Museum
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BRITISH MUSEUM



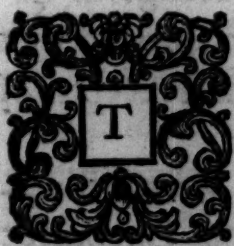
S E R M O N II.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness :

That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.



THE Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, intimated to us in these Words, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God*, appears at least highly reasonable, from the extreme Necessity there is of such a Revelation

lation as the Holy Scripture is declared to be, in Order to Mankind's worshipping God in an acceptable Manner ; and from God's Goodness to furnish out to all his Creatures whatever is really conducive to their Happiness : But it appears more directly true, from those Marks of Divine Mission which accompanied the Authors of those Writings, *viz.* Prophecies and Miracles ; and likewise from the concurrent Testimony of undoubted History thro' the intermediate Ages of the World with respect to all those Circumstances, which it is the proper Business of History to clear up and establish. But the most affecting Argument to evince the Divine Inspiration of Sacred Writings seems to be the intrinsic Worth and Excellency of them ; and the blessed Tendency they have to exalt Human Nature in its Religious Capacity, and to promote the Glory of that God, for whose Service the Precepts of them are calculated.

ALL the former Articles were distinctly treated of in our foregoing Discourse : The last was mentioned only in general Terms, and reserv'd for a more particular
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Consideration under the two other Heads which the Words of the Text furnish out to us, *viz.* The Usefulness and the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.

THE Usefulness of the Holy Scriptures is pointed out to us in these Words, *is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, for Doctrine*, i. e. for those Things which are known and believed by us ; *for Reproof*, i. e. for reforming of Errors in Point of Doctrine ; *for Correction*, i. e. for Amendment of Life ; *for Instruction in Righteousness*, i. e. for the Precepts of Holy Living. The two former of these Articles relate to Religious Faith and Knowledge, the two latter to Religious Practice.

THE Holy Scripture then is profitable for Doctrine, by declaring to us most exalted and momentous Truths, with respect to the Divine Nature and our Being. They inform us that God is a Spirit infinite in every Kind and Degree, both of Natural and Moral Perfection ; that He is our Almighty Creator, our continual Preserver, our gracious Rewarder ; and these

these Articles, however they are esteem'd Branches of Natural Religion only, are nevertheless in the Holy Scriptures set forth under such bright and affecting Characters, as do at least wonderfully enlarge and refine our Notions of the Deity, and enflame our Devotion towards Him. But what Human Reason could never in the least have apprehended, they inform us likewise, that in the Unity of the Godhead do subsist three distinct Persons, who are one in all Attributes essential to the Deity, three in their personal Relations, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They inform us yet farther, that these Divine Persons are pleased likewise to bear distinct Relations to Mankind; the Father is called our Creator, the Son our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier; and that they satisfy all these Relations towards us under Terms of infinite Love and Kindness. With respect to our own Being they declare we are God's Creatures placed here in a State of Probation, in order to qualify ourselves for a State of Bliss and Perfection hereafter; that we came out of the Almighty's Hands upright, but

but that, through our first Parents, we are fallen from our original Righteousness, and consequently from God's Favour : They declare that thro' the Merits of the Blessed Jesus, we are admitted into a second Covenant with God, whereby we may be restored to a State, tho' not of perfect, yet of acceptable, Righteousness ; that by complying with the Terms of Worship and Obedience prescribed in this Covenant, we shall be made Partakers of exquisite Bliss to all Eternity, and that God's Holy Spirit does enable us to come up to these Terms, by enlightening our Understanding with all saving Knowledge, and sanctifying our Wills and Affections with such Heavenly Dispositions of Mind as can alone qualify us for those seraphick Enjoyments, which God hath prepared for them that love Him. These are some of the main Doctrines contain'd in the Holy Scripture ; and to prevent any thing of Mistake in such important Truths, those Sacred Writings we are told are *profitable for Reproof* likewise, *i. e.* for the reforming Errors in Point of Doctrine.

SUCH

SUCH is the Perverseness of corrupted Men, that notwithstanding the absolute Brightness of the Holy Scriptures, they are continually striking out some deceitful Lights of their own, and wilfully mistake in the Knowledge of Divine Truths, by dazling their Reason with Vapours of their own raising ; or, to speak without a Metaphor, Mankind are fond of their own Devices, and are continually setting forth new, and therefore erroneous Doctrines. Now the Holy Scriptures, by declaring to us what are true Doctrines, do plainly declare that all Doctrines contrary to them must be false ; so that by bringing any Doctrine to the Test of Scripture, which is the Standard of Divine Truth, we may there discover what Kind and Degree of Error is contain'd in it, and reform it accordingly. Many Errors in Religious Faith and Knowledge, are there particularly censured and confuted ; and Error in general is so carefully guarded against, that whatever monstrous Births of Heresie, the Ignorance or Prophaneness of Man can possibly produce, may be entirely cut off by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the

Word

Word of God : For indeed all Errors in sacred Matters, do either arise from, or are supported by Perversion of Scripture ; and therefore by clearing up and establishing the true Meaning of Holy Writ, those Errors must evidently be reform'd.

THE Usefulness of the Sacred Writings is not confin'd to Faith only ; it extends likewise to Practice ; they are *profitable for Correction*, i. e. for Amendment of Life : It is professedly the Design of the Holy Scriptures, to turn Mankind from the Error of their Ways and the Evil of their Doings ; and this they do by discovering the Baseness and Deceitfulness of Sin, its heinous Nature and destructive Consequences ; by rebuking it with all Boldness in every Shape, and guarding against it in its first Motions and most distant Appearances ; insomuch that we cannot conceive any Antidote against Sin more powerful, more universal, more intimate than the Corrections we meet with in the Holy Scriptures ; they are like a *Refiner's Fire*, and like a *Fuller's Sope*.

BUT Correction is not their sole Business in Point of Practice, they are profitable

able likewise for *Instruction in Righteousness*, i. e. for the Precepts of Holy Living. Our Duty in every Respect is there set down in the strongest and clearest Lights ; Piety towards God ; Justice and Charity towards our Neighbour ; Chastity and Temperance with Respect to ourselves, can never be enjoined under Terms of greater Purity and Enforcement : No Rules can be conceiv'd more exact and easy for directing our Views, and disposing our Wills, and ordering our Affections aright ; Virtue appears here in every Kind, and Degree, and Circumstance of it cloath'd with the most rational Beauty ; it is lovely without, and all glorious within. This is the Substance of the Holy Scriptures : The Manner and Circumstances wherein they are delivered to us, do likewise tend very much to enlarge their Usefulness.

THERE runs, for Instance, thro' the Whole of them, a most wonderful Connection : The Doctrines declared, the Duties enjoined, the Rewards proposed, have all an entire Harmony within themselves, and a strong Reference to one another : The Doctrines do all conspire to
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make up one regular System of Divine Knowledge ; the Precepts form a compleat Scheme of Godlike Virtue ; the Rewards a perfect State of Heavenly Happiness. Again, the Doctrines and the Precepts mutually advance the Practice of the one, and the Knowledge of the other : *He that does God's Will*, says our Blessed Saviour, *shall know of his Doctrine* ; and common Reason will inform us, that he who knows most, will be best enabled, and most powerfully engaged to Practice : In like manner the Happiness of Eternity will put us upon a most diligent Search after the Knowledge of our Duty, and a more vigorous Practice of it ; and, on the contrary, a firm Belief, an extended Knowledge and a vigorous Practice of what is contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, do, thro' God's Grace, regularly lead us on to Glory. Now such a beautiful and useful Connection as this, naturally fixes our Attention more closely to those things which are here declared ; refines our Notions, and facilitates our Performances, and carries our Thoughts up to that God of Harmony and Order, who *weigheth all*

VOL. I. D *things*

things in the exactest Balance of Truth and Justice.

THE majestick Plainness of Style under which the Holy Scriptures are promulged, is another Circumstance of Usefulness ; they have God for their Author, and are therefore majestick ; they are intended for the Use of Man, and are therefore plain : In the former respect, they affect us with a reverential Regard, in the latter, they afford us Comfort and Satisfaction. The Truths which are here promulged, are sublime, above the highest Reach of rational Attainments ; the Manner of their Promulgation condescending to the lowest of Human Infirmities : Had they not been sublime, the Learned would have despised them ; had they not been condescending, the Unlearned could not have known them : But as they now stand, they are the equal, useful, and admired Instructions both of the wisest and the most illiterate of Men. And this too is an Evidence of their Divine Origin : This is the Brightness of Truth, under the Direction of the most consummate Wisdom, to make those things, which the ablest

ablest Men cou'd never discover, lie level to the Capacity of the meanest.

THE Force with which those Sacred Writings insinuate into Mens Hearts, and the Influence they have upon their Lives, are farther Circumstances and Arguments of their Usefulness : The former of these, is what Men feel within themselves : The latter, is what appears in their outward Actions. With Respect to the former, let any one, but the profane Scoffer, declare with what marvellous Subtlety they can pierce the Soul ; how insensibly they can diffuse a Tincture of Godliness over every Faculty ; with what bright Ideas of Virtue and Happiness they enrich the Understanding ; with what Heavenly Dispositions they possess the Will ; with what Divine Sentiments they purify and enliven the Affections ; with what Variety of Address they can accommodate themselves to every Temper ; breaking the Hardiness of the Stubborn, rousing the Carelessness of the supine Offender ; reviving the Spirit of the Contrite ones ; encouraging the Zeal of the Vigorous and Persevering. Let those therefore who know

from their own Experience, declare (for those alone can declare it) what pious Ardours are hereby kindled, what Fervour of Devotion burns within them ; what elevated Notions of Spiritual Enjoyments ; what rapturous Perceptions of Divine Comforts : But even the Prophane and the Unbeliever may declare, if they please, what Lustre is hereby shed upon the Lives and Actions of those, who sincerely obey the blessed Lessons of Holiness which are there prescribed ; their regular Piety, their disinterested Charity, their unaffected Sobriety ; the Sweetness, the Humility, the Chearfulness of their Behaviour : These and many such like Instances set them up for burning and shining Lights unto the World, and prove that Divinity alone must have dictated those Instructions, which are able to raise Men so much above themselves ; and that the Light with which they thus shine among Men, is no other than the Reflexion of the *glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God.*

UPON the Whole then, we see that the Holy Scriptures are a vast Treasury of
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of Divine Instruction, both in their Substance and their several Circumstances, containing Abundance of Wisdom unto Salvation: But whether the Wisdom there contain'd be sufficient for our Salvation, comes now in the third and last Place to be considered.

Now the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures is pointed out to us in these Words; *That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works*: The Man of God, i. e. one who ministers in Holy Things. The Apostle is here speaking particularly to *Timothy*, whom he had left Bishop at *Ephesus*; and exhorts him to continue in those things which he had learn'd and been assured of, viz. those things which were contain'd in the Scriptures, they being able, as the Apostle saith, *to make thee wise unto Salvation*; which plainly implies the Sufficiency of them in general for such Wisdom: But in the Words before us, the Apostle is addressing him as a Pastor of the Church, and declares that the Holy Scriptures will make him *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works*. Here

therefore his Assertion is much stronger ; for if he who is to instruct others in all things necessary unto Salvation, be rendered perfectly, thoroughly furnish'd for such his Office, by Means of the Holy Scriptures, it evidently follows that those Sacred Writings must be sufficient for all the Purposes of Holiness in Point both of Truth and Practice. But to treat of this Head more particularly :

UNLESS the Holy Scriptures were a sufficient Revelation of God's Will, they would not answer the Purposes of a written one ; for a written Revelation being, as was shewed in our former Discourse, necessary to supply the Place of immediate Revelations from the Almighty, and to prevent the corrupt Conveyances of Tradition ; it ought in no wise to leave any Occasion for the former, and no Room at all for the latter ; *i. e.* it ought to be of itself so perfect, as to want no Addition in Matters either of Faith or Practice.

AGAIN, the written Revelations of God's Will under the *Mosaic* Dispensation, were continually growing, and manifestly declare they had a Tendency to
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some certain Period of Time, wherein by the Messiah's Appearance, a more perfect and durable State of things would commence ; and their Law, which was the weak Elements of those better Things to come, was to be swallow'd up in the Substance of those Things. To the *Jews* therefore were committed the lively Oracles of God, but those Oracles were defective with Respect to the full Purpose of God, and plainly shew'd their Deficiency, by declaring that something better would succeed : Accordingly it is written, that all *the Prophets prophesied until John the Baptist* ; and after him began the last Dispensation, *viz.* that of the Gospel ; wherein as God compleated his great Designs for the Redemption of Mankind, He compleated likewise the Revelation of his Will. The Almighty was always pleased to proportion his Revelations to the Periods of Time in which He promulged them ; and as this last Dispensation is perfective of the Almighty's Counsels, we cannot but infer, that this last Revelation is perfective of his Will. And as this Period will never be improved by any

succeeding one, so we may be assured,
 that what is written concerning it, is suf-
 ficient for our Instruction in all Matters
 relating to our Knowledge and Practice.
 Farther yet, were we ourselves to declare
 what Revelation of God's Will would be
 sufficient for Mankind, under our present
 Circumstances, the Answer would be ob-
 viously this; such a Revelation as wou'd
 most effectually discover to us how our
 Sins should be forgiven, and how we
 should serve God in the most acceptable
 Manner : And this is the Case of the Holy
 Scriptures ; they discover that by the
 meritorious Death and Sufferings of the
 Son of God, Sin is atoned for, its Punish-
 ment is done away, its Guilt is removed,
 and that by hearty Repentance and sin-
 cere Amendment, by a full Trust in God's
 Mercies thro' Faith in Christ's Blood, this
 all-available Expiation, which was made
 for Sin in general, will be particularly ap-
 plied to us ; that a full Remission is there-
 by vouchsafed to each Individual for all
 his Transgressions, and that thereupon the
 Pardon of each is sealed in Heaven. This
 is the Scripture-Doctrine of the Remission
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of Sins ; and it is impossible almost to conceive that any immediate Communion from God Almighty himself, and much less any Tradition, can render it more strong and ample, than it is there revealed to us.

As to the Service and Worship of the Almighty, no Precepts can be contriv'd more rational, more pure, more perfect, more agreeable to the Nature of God, more conducive to the Happiness of Man, than what are prescribed in the Holy Scriptures : We are there taught to *worship God*, who is a Spirit, *in Spirit and in Truth*, and consequently in the most acceptable Manner : God himself declares that He will graciously accept such our Worship : He hath given us those Precepts to regulate our Affections, and to direct our Lives by them : And what are we, that we should presume to take from, or add unto them ? If therefore that can be thought a sufficient Revelation of God's Will to Mankind, whereby we are admitted to know him in the Unity and Personality of his Existence, in the many Relations He is pleased to bear towards
us ;

us ; in his many glorious and tremendous Attributes, and to worship and adore him in them all : If purifying our Souls by Faith, our Lives by Holiness ; if a sincere, deliberate, entire Dedication of ourselves to God's Blessed Will ; if a lively Flame of Devotion towards the Divine Being, a vigorous Exercise of Justice and Charity towards our Neighbour, a pure Possession of ourselves in Chastity and Temperance ; if the forming our Minds into the Approbation, our Lives into the Practice of every Virtue : If these, and such like Instances of Worship, be the most acceptable to the Almighty, the most beneficial to the Performers of them, then do the Holy Scriptures come up to their intended Character in that other Instance ; and are, with respect to the Service and Worship of God, a sufficient Revelation of his Will to Mankind ; But the Doctrines of Faith, and the Lessons of Holy Living contain'd in the Sacred Writings, are not only perfect and compleat in themselves, but, in all their Circumstances, they are back'd with the most powerful Motives and Aids for our believing

lieving and performing them. The Gospel hath the Promises and Threatnings of the Life that now is, but more especially of that which is to come; the present Favour of God's Providence, the future Assurances of a Glorious Inheritance with the Blessed Saints in Light, are the Motives to our Obedience: The Displeasure of the Almighty in this Life, and the Torments of everlasting Vengeance in the next, are the Wages of our Disobedience; and he who will not conform with the Precepts of the Holy Scriptures upon those Motives, will be wrought upon by no Motives whatever. Again, the Assistances afforded us, are the gracious Influences of God's Blessed Spirit helping our Infirmities, quickening our Endeavours, raising our Affections, and in all respects *working in us both to will and do according to the good Pleasure of the Almighty*; so that nothing is required but our own sincere Co-operation with the Divine Grace, and then we may do all things that are commanded us.

UPON the Whole then, it hath pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe us a most glorious

glorious and perfect Revelation of his Blessed Will ; a Revelation unfolding to us the Wonders of his Providence, and dispensing the Riches of his Grace ; a Revelation carrying our Prospects into Eternity, proposing to our present Hopes the Glories of God's Kingdom, and qualifying us for the future Enjoyment of them. How full of Awe and Delight are those Sacred Writings ! they are no other than the Word of God ; but the Word of God bringing unto us Peace and Salvation. In the former View they challenge our most devout Regard ; in the latter, they stand recommended to us upon the Foot of our own eternal Interest. It is so obvious an Inference from what has been said, that it scarce seems necessary to infer the great Obligation we lie under, of a diligent and pious Study of the Holy Scriptures : The Study of them in a speculative Way is indeed more particularly the Duty of those who *minister in Holy Things*, and relates to them as Part of their Profession : They ought to employ all the Compass and Force of human Learning, and human Learning is never
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so worthily and greatly employ'd, as in such a Manner, in adorning and defending, in enlightning and establisshing those Mysteries of Godliness, those Doctrines of Truth and Virtue which are therein contain'd : And all the Labour and Application we are Masters of, are but little enough to express the Sense we ought to have of the Value and Sacredness of those Things, which *Holy Men inspired by God* have written unto us of our common Redemption. But the Study of the Holy Scriptures in a practical Way, is Matter of absolute Duty, and takes in all Christians indifferently ; they declare unto all Men Salvation, and declare it in the Words of Force and Pleasantness : From those Funds of Wisdom, we may treasure up to ourselves infinite Portions of future Happiness, and treasure them up with vast Overflowings of present Comfort and Satisfaction : Whatever is there contain'd is written for Universal Benefit and Instruction : Notwithstanding the sublime Nature of the Doctrines, every the meanest Capacity may know them all to his
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Soul's Health ; whatever he there reads he may, thro' God's Grace, so profitably learn, and so acceptably perform, as to *have his Fruit unto present Holiness, and the End everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ.*



SERMON



S E R M O N III.



PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.



IT is a wonderful Advantage in our most Holy Religion, that it sanctifies the whole Man, and gives a Turn of Piety to the most natural and indifferent Circumstances of Life : If we do but keep God's Glory in View, and make that in general the End of our Actions ; whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are constantly engaged

gaged in the Divine Service ; and our whole Life will ascend up to Heaven, as a Sacrifice of a sweet-smelling Savour.

THERE is not a Passion of the Soul, a Temper of Mind, or Function of Body, which may not be improved into a Duty, and consequently which may not promote our eternal Happiness : And such is the Power of the Gospel ; that those, which to an irregenerate Man, are only Tempers and Habits, do, by the blessed Influences of the Holy Spirit upon him who is a new Creature, become Christian Virtues and Graces. Faith, Hope and Charity, *e. g.* simply considered in themselves, are the one, an Habit of the Understanding, the other two, Passions of the Soul : But when refined and exalted under the Gospel, directed to proper Objects, and regulated by Religious Views, they pass into the three Virtues, which are, by way of Eminence, call'd the Theological Virtues, and make up the three most necessary and Divine Graces of a Christian Life.

THUS it is, that Religion does not destroy Nature, but exalts it ; does not alter Mens Faculties, but improves them :

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It is even Nature itself cultivated by right Reason, restored and purified by Gospel-Grace. Nature prompts us to pursue our Happiness in general ; Religion binds it upon us as a Duty, to pursue that particular sort of Happiness, which it is Man's highest Interest to aspire after : Nature necessarily breaks forth into Joy, when its Pursuits after Happiness meet with Success ; Religion commands us to make God the Object, as of our Happiness, so of our Joy ; *Rejoice in the Lord*, saith the Apostle : Nature seems always ready to fall in with so delectable a Passion, but is much at a loss for Matter to exercise it upon ; Religion proposes God to us, as a never-failing Source of substantial Rejoicings : *Rejoice in the Lord always*, saith the Apostle, *and again, I say, rejoice.*

THIS Precept was given to the *Philippians* at a Time, when the Church of God laboured under Persecution. And if in the Midst of Dangers and Difficulties, we are commanded to possess our Souls of the calm Composure of secure Innocence : If in the Midst of worldly

Calamities, it be our Duty to rejoice, and Religion be able to furnish out Matter for our continual Rejoicings; How much more does it become our Duty, how much more ready ought we to be, to exercise this delightful Passion, when such Trials and Calamities are removed far from us; when no other Difficulties and Afflictions fall upon us, than what are common to Man?

IT shall be the Business of this Discourse, to set forth and inculcate the Precept now before us, by considering,

I. WHAT that Rejoicing in the Lord is, which we are here commanded to exercise.

II. THE Duty and Advantages of it :
And,

III. THE Means of rendering us capable of performing it.

I. THEN let us consider, what that Rejoicing in the Lord is, which we are here commanded to exercise.

IT is the being of a regular Evenness of Temper; a chearful Frame of Spirit; a set-

a settled Complaisancy of Mind ; The finding Comfort, and taking Delight in every Condition of Life ; The looking up to God with the Gratitude of Praise and Thanksgiving for every Dispensation of his Providence ; The making the Satisfaction of Religion our chief Delight, and applying all the various Occurrences of human Life, to our present Comfort and future Welfare.

THUS then, Religious Joy is not a transient Exertion of that Passion, but an habitual Chearfulness of Mind ; It does not bubble up in the flashy Transports of Mirth, but smooths over Life with a constant Serenity : Not that Religion is without its Transports, it even abounds with them ; Vigorous and Pious Contemplations on the Divine Perfections and the Joys of Eternity, will raise in us Ecstasies of Delight : And this Difference will always be found between worldly and religious Transports ; The former naturally fall off into Dejection and Melancholy ; But Acts of Religious Transports, supply fresh Springs of Comfort and Satisfaction to us, and make the Streams of

our habitual Rejoicings flow on more clearly, more strongly, more copiously.

It must indeed be confessed, that this World is a Place, as of imperfect Happiness, so of imperfect Joy : The most serene and calm Condition of Life, meets with the gloomy and ruffling Storms of many Afflictions ; and it is impossible in the Midst of outward Uneasiness, to preserve a perfect Composure within. But we shall come up to this Precept of rejoicing always ; when our Joy is substantial, tho' not compleat ; when it is predominant, tho' not unallay'd : When none of the Storms of Life are raised within our own Breasts ; none of them suffered to rage and grow tumultuous there : When the Soul has a controuling Power, in frequently preventing those Disorders which might otherwise arise there, in lessening and becalming those that do : When Religion affords us certain Pleasures ; This World only accidental ones ; to be received with thankful Indifference, to be parted from with chearful Resignation : When we are easy and contented, though not equally so, under
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outward Blessings and Calamities : When the Severity of our composed Judgment, can curb the Petulancies of wanton Mirth, and the lively Ideas of our Imagination, can feast even our Reason with Jubilee and Delight : When we esteem God to be our God, our Hope, our Dependance, our Happiness under all Circumstances, and bless and adore Him under all : When, thro' the Assistance of his Grace, we are able to abound with Satisfaction, to be in Want with Contentment ; to enjoy the good Things of this Life with Thankfulness, to suffer its evil Things with Patience : When this is our Case, then may we be truly said to satisfy the Precept now before us ; This is that *rejoicing in the Lord always*, which we are here commanded to exercise.

BUT in treating upon this Head, Complexion is very much to be considered ; and this Duty, tho' necessary for all, is not equally easy to all, nor in so high a Degree practicable by all : The natural Tenderness of some Constitutions, bends under every Weight of Affliction ; The Timorousness of their Temper fills their

Minds with Fears of Calamities which are not, and doubles the Pressure of those, which are : Others, on the contrary, are blessed with Abundance of innate Vigour, as tho' Nature had designed them to outmatch Adversity, and to rise superior to every worldly Suffering : Religion is in both Cases necessary to strengthen and support the former, and at least to correct and improve the latter. A Man, through Hardiness of Nature may be brought to laugh in the midst of Distresses ; yet such his Laughter may be Madness and Folly ; his Heart may not cheer him after a godly Sort ; He may not rejoice in the Lord. The Application of religious Comforts in this latter Case, is indeed the easier Task ; but in the former, it is far from being impossible : Christianity does not only improve natural Strength, it supplies for it ; Grace will support us above, and even against Nature : Let the Streams of worldly Afflictions be open'd upon us in never so large and forcible a Current ; the Springs of religious Joy will be continually bubbling up for our Refreshment : Piety will
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be to us, having nothing, as tho' we possess'd all Things ; and when all other Succours fail us, we may still *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation.*

PROCEED we now in the Second Place to consider the Duty and Advantages of such our Rejoicing : The Duty and Advantages, because the Duty will best appear from considering the Advantages of it, and they may be comprized under the Three following Articles.

- I. IT enables us to go through our religious Performances in a much more advantageous and acceptable Manner.
- II. IT makes us much more happy and easy in this Life.
- III. IT tunes and harmonizes our Souls for Heaven.

I. THEN the habitual Chearfulness of religious Joy enables us to go through our religious Performances in a much more advantageous and acceptable Manner.

IT is the Free-will Offering of the Heart which God requires at our Hands ; but Gloominess of Thought, damps all

the Powers of the Soul, renders it lifeless and unactive ; and the Spirit of Devotion is quite lost, in the midst of anxious and desponding Cares. God, who is the Chief, the Sum of our Happiness, is to be addressed and enjoyed with Vigour ; but Chearfulness of Mind can alone inspire that Vigour : Religious Joy must enliven and actuate the whole Man ; must lift up the Hands which hang down, and *strengthen the feeble Knees* ; must enflame the Heart with Sentiments of sincere Gratitude, and fill the Mouth with Songs of devout Praise. A settled Complaisancy of Mind, draws us nearer to God, by making our Affections towards Him more intense, our Dependance upon His Providence more entire, our Converses with Him more vigorous and delightful. Chearfulness engages us to encounter and go through all the Difficulties of our Duty ; gives us the truest Relish of the Almighty's Mercies, the highest Sense of our Obligations towards Him ; and renders His Service easy and pleasant to us, by putting it upon the ingenuous Foot of Gratitude and Love : It represents God to us,
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under the brightest Characters of whatever is amiable and excellent ; Religion under those, of solid Truth and divine Purity ; and the Joys of Heaven, under the most elevated Conceptions of Bliss and Glory : By this Means it renders our Love of God entire and fervent ; our Practice of Virtue sincere and regular ; our Aspirations after Eternity, vigorous and persevering : In short, it makes our whole Life, one continued Act of Praise and Thanksgiving, which the Almighty is pleased to esteem the highest Instance of Devotion, such as He will most graciously accept. *Who so offereth me Thanks and Praise, saith the Lord, he honoureth Me.*

2. THIS Evenness of Temper makes us much more happy and easy in this Life ; more happy with Respect to ourselves, more easy with Respect to our Neighbour.

ABUNDANCE of worldly Happiness and Misery depends chiefly upon Imagination ; The Objects which create them, come upon us with Indifference, and afford either Satisfaction or Uneasiness, according

cording to the Reception they meet with. Now a chearful Frame of Spirit, gives an agreeable Turn of Pleasantness to all Objects that come in its Way : It is ever attended with Clearness of Judgment, and Liveliness of Fancy ; so that it distinguishes between what is able to afford Pleasure, what not ; and chooses or rejects accordingly. It improves all our Enjoyments, it allays and sweetens all our Afflictions ; We are thereby enrich'd with a settled Peace within, and suffer nothing, in Comparison, by Calamities from without.

THE Man of a melancholy Cast of Mind, by being uneasy within himself, becomes troublesome and uneasy to others ; He is jealous and suspicious ; solicitous for he knows not what, displeased he knows not why : This makes his Behaviour reserv'd, his Conversation designing, ready to misinterpret every Word, to resent every Action. This Behaviour calls for Shyness and Indifference from others ; hence ariseth fresh Matter of Jealousy and Resentment ; Affronts and Injuries ensue, and Melancholy turns into
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to downright Uncharitableness. But the chearful Man, naturally overflows in Streams of Good-nature ; He does not reserve his Happiness to himself ; He communicates it to others ; and, like the Sun, diffuses round about him, a delightful Scene of Joy and Gladness, to all he converses with. Love is in all his Thoughts, Meekness in all his Words, Kindness in all his Actions : This provokes others to like Love, and makes Good-will circulate briskly among Men. The Chearfulness of our very Looks hath a benign Influence upon the Peace and Harmony of the World ; and it is a Duty we owe to Mankind, as well as ourselves, to be as far as possible removed from inward Disquietudes, and outward Moroseness : Thus then Religion passes into common Life, and in the Complacency of an even Temper, an excellent Foundation is laid for Christian Charity ; It not only sweetens, it even sanctifies our whole Conversation, and, as we come now in the Third Place to consider, it tunes and harmonizes our Souls for Heaven.

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OUR Souls will not be changed upon our Entrance into another Life, but only heighten'd and improved thereby ; and what Room can be found for Sullenness and Dejection admidst those blisful Objects of Eternity ? We must rejoice in the Riches of God's Grace, before we can be admitted to rejoice in those of his Glory ; In order to make the Joy of Fruition our Reward hereafter, the Joy of Hope is our Duty here : This Habit therefore of religious Rejoicing, is a proper Preparative for our future Happiness, inasmuch as it gives us an Antepast of Heaven itself ; as large and vigorous a Perception of those Spiritual Delights as our present Faculties are capable of receiving ; and by constant Exercise enlarges that Passion of the Soul, which will be blisfully employ'd to all Eternity. From considering the Duty and Advantages of this habitual Chearfulness of Mind, pass we now to consider, in the Third and last Place, the Means of attaining it ; and these principally are,

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I. THE possessing our Souls with just Notions of, and a sure Trust in the Divine Providence.

II. THE preserving a good Conscience through the regular Discharge of our Duty ; And,

III. THE applying ourselves to commendable and innocent Employments.

I. THEN we are to possess our Souls with just Notions of, and a sure Trust in the Divine Providence.

THE Almighty's Providence is a wonderful Source of Comfort to all that are truly sensible of it : We are placed under the immediate Protection of a Being infinitely wise, powerful, and gracious ; Whatever we enjoy, whatever we suffer, comes all from the same bountiful indulgent Hand, who desires and provides for our Happiness, beyond the largest of our Conceptions ; We may therefore with implicit Joy rely upon his Conduct, and *cast all our Care upon Him, who so wonderfully careth for us* : It is the constant Effect of Melancholy and Discontent to
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murmur and repine at the Almighty Dispensations ; and without considering any of the Divine Indulgencies, to extract Misery and Discontent from all the dark Parts of his Providence : But he who has brought himself to depend upon God's Wisdom and Goodness, is easy in his Afflictions, and happy in those Dispensations he does not understand, because he is assured, they are for his Advantage : God's Providence, however unsearchable, is nevertheless sure and benign in its Operations, and *all things will work together for good unto him that fears the Lord* : He tastes Divine Mercy in all the Blessings and Chastisements he receives, and thereby, the former meet with a double Relish, the latter, become at least easy and palatable. Just Notions of this Article will inform us that God is not partial in his Government ; that He is no Respector of Persons, but intends, as far as in his infinite Wisdom He sees convenient for us, the present, but absolutely the future Welfare of all his Creatures ; and a well-grounded Dependance upon his Providence gives us all the bright Assurances of Safety and
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Happiness. But in Order that such our Dependance may be well grounded, we must in the

2d Place be careful to preserve a good Conscience through the regular Discharge of our Duty.

CHEARFULNESS is the regular Attendant upon Innocence ; Virtue and Joy do naturally subsist together ; Guilt is dark and gloomy, filling the Soul with all the dreadful Apprehensions of whatever is odious and miserable. God, who is the Foundation of all solid Comfort, is here rejected, and all Pretensions to the favourable Regard of his Providence, are given up ; and without God, Chearfulness would be utter Folly, Laughter direct Madness. *The Joy of a wicked Man, is as the Crackling of Thorns in the Fire ; however it may blaze for a Time, it soon evaporates into Smoak, and is at best but noisy Vanity ; in the midst of such Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of such Mirth is Heaviness.*

BUT the Joy of a good Conscience is a continual Feast ; The calm Composure of secure Innocence, the pleasurable Sense

of virtuous and religious Actions, fill the Heart with Complaisancy, enlarge and replenish the Soul with Satisfaction. The Applauses of a self-approving Mind are always enlivening and refreshing ; Virtue knows no Tumults and Disorders ; It gives us a grateful Reflection upon whatever is past, a peaceful Enjoyment of whatever is present, a delightful Prospect of whatever is to come ; It swallows up all our Cares, and Fears, and Doubts in Love and Faith, and a glorious Assurance of an happy Eternity.

BUT in speaking to this Head we must not omit the great Duty, as well as Expedience of an uniform and fervent Habit of Devotion. Fervent Intercourses with the Almighty in Prayer and Meditation, make the Brightness of the Divine Perfections familiar to us, give us all the blissful Perceptions of pure and compleat Enjoyments, and shed an enlivening Tincture of Heavenly Satisfaction over every Part of our Lives : Devotion enlarges the Soul, and enriches it with every Divine Blessing ; It opens upon us those Rivers of Pleasure which are
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at God's Right-Hand, and replenishes our most outstretch'd Desires with Raptures of Delight, which cannot be uttered. The Uniformity of such our Devotion will make those Pleasures perpetual to us, the Fervency of such our Devotion, will make them transcendantly delightful. A Mind thus piously affected, and zealously employ'd, can never be at a loss for Matter of Joy and Transport, amidst those ennobling and engaging Acts of Praise and Adoration, whereby it is ever approaching the Divine Being, and communicates with him in his Happiness. These blissful Outgoings of the Soul towards God, will make Life one continued Scene of Pleasure, so that to attain the Spirit of true Devotion is the most compendious Way of becoming happy ; for whosoever thus converses continually with the Lord must necessarily fall in with the Precept in the Text, *of rejoicing in the Lord always.*

3dly and lastly, THE applying ourselves to commendable and innocent Employments, is proposed as another proper Means of attaining this habitual Chearfulness of Temper.

THE State of the Mind depends wonderfully upon that of the Body, a sprightly Flow of Spirits will naturally break forth into a pleasing Gaiety of Soul, and a sluggish Inactivity of Blood, will benumb the Mind with Hebitude and Melancholy. Idleness and Indolence overcharge the Body with gross Humours, and oppress the Mind with Loads of Discontent. Industry quickens and enlivens; Activity of Body, warms and exhilarates the Soul. Accordingly the Business and Amusements of Life, serve to employ and recreate Mankind, to fill up their Time, at least innocently, and dispose them for the better Performance of Religious Duties, by exercising their Bodies in what is wholesome, their Minds in what is agreeable. Thus it is, that our Callings, however laborious, are not imposed on us as Hardships, they are really Blessings; and those Persons whose Circumstances set them above pursuing the Fatigues of Business, are obliged to supply that Defect by the Fatigues of Exercise.

AGAIN, we ought to apply ourselves to such moderate and innocent Diversions,

as may keep both our Minds and Bodies in a right Frame of Vigour and Complacency. God did not place us here, to tantalize us with the bare Sight of worldly Blessings; as He has given us all things richly to possess, so likewise comfortably to enjoy. The Earth brings forth Briars and Thorns, and is therefore not a Place of compleat Happiness; but it likewise brings forth Corn, and Wine, and Oil, that they may strengthen and gladden Man's Heart, and make him a chearful Countenance; and we may apply these Gifts of God to their intended Purposes, with Pleasure and Advantage. This Way of conceiving, enlarges our Views with respect to outward Enjoyments; they hereby do not rest in the outward Man, they administer to the Spiritual Happiness of the inner Man. But after all, what is mentioned upon this Head is chiefly prudential; these Circumstances having only a more remote Influence upon the Mind, by immediately affecting the Body, they have not a spiritual, they have a natural Connection only, with the Precept now before us;

however, it is not amiss, to suggest any thing that may be of Service, even in the most remote Instruments of Duty, especially since we frequently find, that bodily Disorders betray the Minds of sincere well-designing Persons, into Discontent and Despair : They imagine themselves in a reprobate Condition, and feel none of the Comforts of Religion, purely because their Fancy is clouded with outward Melancholy and gross Humours. Here the Malady is entirely of the Body, and therefore the Applications of wholesome Exercise, of agreeable, but innocent, Recreations, are the proper Means of recovering the Advantages of Religious Joy.

IN short, it is our Duty to apply whatever contributes to promote the Evenness of our Temper, the Chearfulness of our Souls, and Satisfaction of our Minds ; because, through God's Blessing, it will likewise contribute to our more vigorous Performance of every Virtue, our Attainment of every divine Grace.

BUT while we do thus, by every pious and prudential Methods, endeavour

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to keep the Spring of Religious Rejoycings within our own Breasts, pure and open, let the Overflowings of it stream forth in every Method of Communication among our Neighbours. The pleasing Influences, which Religion has upon us, may provoke others to like Piety ; for Devotion never stands so powerfully recommended to the Imitation of Mankind, as when Peace, Love and Joy are its direct and visible Effects.

AGAIN, it is an excellent Rule in Life, when we are not able to perform higher Duties, to employ ourselves in those that are lesser : But the Good-nature of a pious Christian may be continually exercised ; where Acts of more substantial Charity, are out of the Sphere of our Abilities, kind Expressions, Mildness of Behaviour, agreeable Turns of Conversation, and many other engaging Methods of keeping up Good-will, which are the natural Outgoings of Christian Chearfulness, contribute wonderfully to promote the present Peace and Happiness of Mankind; do naturally tend to propagate the Exercise of Religious Rejoycing, and make

the general Practice of our Duty much more easy and delightful.

So far is Christianity from being of that reclude and abstracted Nature, as some Religionists falsely pretend, that it is in the highest Degree free in its Carriage, diffusive in its Behaviour ; even common Life shares largely of its Influences, and it improves the Offices of mutual Intercourse into Gospel Virtues and Graces.

So far again is Religion from being of a fullen morose Nature, a seve Contradiction to all Joy and Satisfaction whatever, that it makes Joy the End of our Being, and Joy the Means of attaining that End : And if we may rejoice in the Precepts of Christianity, how much more in the Rewards of it ? This Religious Joy, which is at present our Duty, as it is greater than, and distinct from, any thing that this World can give, so neither can it take it away : That Fullness of Joy which abides us hereafter, is glorious, beyond Conception ; it will afford us an Immensity, an Eternity of Happiness.



S E R M O N IV.



P S A L M l x v. 11.

Thou crownest the Year with thy Goodness, and thy Paths drop Fatness.



THE constant Revolutions of the Year, and the regular Succession of fruitful Seasons consequent thereupon, are such obvious and ample Declarations of the Goodness and Power of that God, by the Bounty of whose Hands, and Riches of whose Mercy, our *Hearts are filled with Food and Gladness*, that St. Paul calls them the Witness he left of himself in the

World. By our Creation we do indeed exist, but by the Providence of that Almighty Nourisher of Mankind we continue in our Existence ; we enjoy that Existence with Comfort, and are enabled to perform all the necessary and plausible Functions of Life. But such is the degenerate State of fallen Man, we are apt to forget the Largeness of those Benefits, which are poured daily upon us, we look upon them as Blessings of course, depending upon such stated Rules and Laws of Nature, as shall not be broken ; and with the Indifference of unthankful Receivers, we fancy the Fruits of the Earth, the Fruits of our own Industry. But if we consider God as well the wonderful Controuler, as Author of Nature, who ordereth as well as created all things for the Pleasure of his Almighty Will, we shall find abundant Reason to give continual Thanks for continual Mercies, their being common by no Means taking off from their being great ; and with the humble Praise of Dependancy and Gratitude, we ought to look up to the All-bountiful Hand of the Almighty, from whom

whom we receive our daily Bread. How glaring soever the extraordinary Works of God's Providence appear, yet the ordinary Dispensations of it are still more wonderful both in Usefulness and Variety. Do we admire the Greatness of that Power, whereby above five thousand were fed by a few Barley-Loaves and small Fishes; and shall we not much rather with thankful Hearts and Mouths look up to and adore the Almighty Goodness of the same Eternal Being, who feeds Millions of Millions with the daily Overflowings of Riches and Plenteousness? But in order to consider the wonderful Power and Kindness of that God, *who crowneth the Year with his Goodness, and whose Paths, or, as the Old Translation renders it, whose Clouds drop Fatness*; I shall in the following Discourse take occasion to consider,

I. THE Words themselves, as referring to God the Encrease of the Fruits of the Earth. And,

II. THE Tempers of Mind which those Reflections ought naturally to raise in us.

I. THEN,

I. THEN, I am to consider the Words themselves, as referring to God the Increase of the Fruits of the Earth. And here I shall 1st endeavour to lay before you the Means whereby God renders the Earth so abundant in Plenty ; and 2^{dly}, shall consider the large and glorious Effects of those Means.

I. THEN as to the Means, whereby the Almighty renders the Earth so abundant in Plenty. The natural Knowledge of former Ages amounted to no more than the bare and immediate referring to Almighty God all the Appearances of Nature ; Philosophy in its more improved State finally indeed refers all to God, but by the Mediation of second Causes ; so that they could only view the Glory of God in the Effects of his Power and the Goodness of his Providence, but we can praise and adore him likewise in contemplating the Means whereby those glorious Effects are produced. And here, whether we consider the wonderful Instruments, whereby the Work of Vegetation is wrought, or the Simplicity, whereby those Instruments operate, great certainly

ly will his Power, and infinite will his Wisdom appear. The Means of Vegetation are the four great Elements of Nature. The Heat of the Sun draws up into tender Plants those prolific Juices which the Rain so largely supplies, those Juices are proper Conveyances of the Particles of Earth, which feed and nourish the Plants themselves; and the Air is continually fanning and refreshing, strengthening and expanding the Parts of them.

THESE Appearances are principally caused by those Motions whereby the Heavenly Bodies particularly seem to move in their daily and yearly Courses.

THE first of these Motions causes the grateful and necessary Vicissitude of Day and Night, the latter that of the Seasons; these Motions are so regular, so simple, so harmonious in themselves, as plainly shews they are the Work of that God who is the God of Order and Wisdom. The continual Changes, which are made in the Position of the different Parts of the Earth with respect to the Sun, occasion the Variety of Seasons; Spring,
Summer,

Summer, and Autumn to bring forth, ripen and yield up the Fruits of the Ground, and Winter to prepare the Soil and the Grain sown in it for fresh Productions. The Sun again occasions the Exhalation of the Vapours and superfluous Moisture of the Earth, which, when form'd into Clouds, descend in grateful and enlivening Showers, in large Drops both of the *former and latter Rain*, which water and refresh the Ground. To this general Theory I would subjoin one Circumstance : It has been calculated what Disadvantages would accrue to the Earth, if the Course wherein this annual Motion is performed, was either directly from West to East, or from North to South, and the Result has been found in both Cases very great ; but the Disadvantages in the latter Case are three times greater than those in the former. The wise Providence therefore of the Almighty, who settles all things according to Weight, and has made that annual Orbit stand obliquely to both those Directions, and has adjusted the Degrees of its Obliquity in Proportions agreeable to this Computation,

tion, by making it three times more inclin'd to the eastern and western, than it is to the northern and southern Direction. Moreover, the constant and quick Succession of Night and Day are of wonderful Relief to the Plants and Fruits of the Earth ; as after the Business and Fatigue of the Day, our Bodies call for the Repose of the Night, to recruit our wasted Spirits in quiet Rest and Sleep, so are the cooling and refreshing Dews of the Night not less necessary to the purely vegetative Part of the World after the Heat of the Day and the warmer Influences of that glorious Fountain of Vegetation. Thus simple is the Almighty in his Operations ; and nothing sure can so greatly recommend the Works of Nature as their Simplicity. The Thoughts and Works of Man in the most common and trivial Affairs, are full of Confusion and Perplexity. The Almighty and All-wise One in the most extraordinary and momentous Concerns displays himself in the most plain and simple Methods of Operation. This certainly is the Power of Omnipotence, the Consummation of Wisdom

dom, to call all Nature in to fulfil the Pleasure of his Will, and yet to make it act in so easy and obvious a Manner. My Subject has led me to consider this Point a little Philosophically, and perhaps in Consequence a little obscurely ; though I endeavour'd to express myself with as much Plainness as the Nature of it will allow. But the great Goodness of God will discover itself more evidently and particularly, when we consider the large and glorious Effects which are produced by those Means and Instruments of his Acting. And here the whole Earth is but one great Evidence of the Almighty's Goodness ; He hath spread forth the Surface of the Ground with the Riches of Encrease, and fill'd it with the Fatness of Plenty. Abundance of Provision hath He stored up in the Bowels of the Earth, to supply all the Generations of Men with the Necessaries and Comforts of wholesome and delightful Food : With useful, with an ornamental Variety doth the indulgent Goodness of God spring up in the whole Earth, *bringing forth Grass for the Cattle, and green Herb for the*
mob Service

Service of Man : Wine to make glad the Heart of Man ; Oil to make him a cheerful Countenance ; and Bread to strengthen Man's Heart : So beautiful are the Lillies of the Field, that even Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of them : So grateful a Prospect do the Vallies of Corn afford, that they seem even to sport through the Glory of their Plenty, and laugh and sing in the Abundance of their Encrease : Enlivening are the Odours which the Flowers shed round about them : Delightful to the Taste as well as necessary for our Sustenance, are the Fruits, which are so largely supplied in every Kind ; highly serviceable as well as pleasing is the constant Succession of them in their several Seasons, not cloying and burthening us all at once with one full and general Harvest of the Fruits of the whole Year, but opening upon us one after another in a delightful Series of different Products ; one Sort of Fruit blossoming only, when another is hastening to Maturity, and when a third is full ripe and fit to gather. Thus gracious and benign is the Almighty

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ty to Mankind ; thus largely did He feed us with the Plenty of his Goodness, and enrich us with the Overflowings of his Bounty : Thus wise is He in every Contrivance ; thus good in every Execution of his Power : But to Man doth He particularly shew his loving Kindness ; other Creatures do likewise receive their Food from God ; but it is Man, whose Happiness is principally intended by the Fruits of the Earth.

IN this lower World Man is the Sovereign ; to Him is given Dominion over the rest of this lower Creation, and to his Use all the other Parts of it are subjected. The Inanimate World is utterly incapable of Happiness, but the Animate World is capable of Happiness in such Degrees as are proportioned to the Extent of their Faculties : And here the wise and good Providence of the Almighty has so ordered it, that that Part of the Creation which can receive no Happiness, shall administer to the Service and Happiness of that which can, and that they all contribute to the Good and Welfare of Man, the Lord and Governor

vernour of the whole Earth. And thus it is, that abundance of the Produce of the Ground does only in consequence tend to his Service. The Beasts of the Land, the Fowls of the Air, and the Fishes of the Sea, all partake of the Almighty's Bounty ; they find large Supplies of Food for their Subsistence, and Conveniencies for their Habitations ; they rejoice and solace themselves in the Plenty of their Provisions, yet finally for Man it is, that they receive those Provisions ; they likewise minister to our Necessities, and contribute to our Satisfaction, and for our Service and Enlargement they are and were created.

BUT moreover, the good Providence of the Almighty discovers itself most eminently in the Room it leaves for the Art and Industry of Man to exert itself ; wonderful indeed are the Productions of Nature, but not so spontaneous as to want no Assistance ; vast Improvements may be and are made in the Management of the Soil, and the Care of the Plants ; and this Care, this Management employs Mankind in a diligent and healthful Ex-

ercise upon them, whereby we may improve them into Blessings ; accordingly the Labour and Sweat of the Brow, which are the Consequences of the natural Barrenness of the Earth, are found in all respects best suited to the present Condition of Man, because the Blessing of God generally goes along with the honest Diligence of the Husbandman, and greatly encourages our Industry without diminishing the Honour of his own Providence ; for we must not think, that the Fruitfulness of the Seasons is the necessary, tho' God hath made it the natural, Consequences of our Labours : The least Reflection upon the Nature of things will carry our Thoughts up to that great Author of all Being, for every Production of the Earth, and convince us that every Instance of the Almighty's Providence in the common Course of Nature is no other than a Train of Wonders, whereby He preserves his Creation.

WAS it not God that did at first impregnate the Womb of the Earth with such Fecundity of Blessings ? Was it not the Almighty that call'd forth the prolific

lific Warmth of the Sun ; that fix'd the Ordinances of Heaven, and set the Dominion thereof in the Earth ? Did not the first Principles of Nature, the Seeds of all Fruits, and Plants, and Herbs spring from him ? Doth not He continue to visit the Earth with his Goodness, and enrich it with Rivers which are full of Water, to soften its Furrows with the Drops of Rain, and to bless it with the Encrease of Plenty ? Weak and ridiculous would be our Attempts to bring forth Food from the Earth, unless the Almighty was to succour our Endeavours ; we could not form the Seeds, if the Plant itself should once cease to yield them, nor cherish them with vital Heat, if the Sun should withdraw its shining ; we could not of ourselves call down Fatness from the Clouds of Heaven, nor cause the Bud of the tender Herb to spring forth ; so far are we from any Ability to produce them, that we are perfectly ignorant of the Nature of the Production ; the most common Blade of Grass puzzles our nicest Enquiries ; and however some second Causes do not escape our Under-

standing, certain it is, that the Nature of these Causes we can never find, and the Methods of their Operations are utterly out of our Sight : All our Business is to make use of the best Means that Experience has taught us, for a plentiful Produce, but we must depend on God for the Success of them ; we may plant and water, but God alone giveth the Increase. Let him therefore who casteth his Seed upon the Ground, with modest Dependance upon the good Providence of the Almighty, sleep and rise Night and Day, his Seed will nevertheless spring up he knows not how ; the Earth will bring forth Fruit of itself, first *the Blade*, then *the Ear*, then *the full Corn in the Ear* ; and when the Corn is thus brought forth, thus ripened, then let him with joyful Thankfulness put in his Sickle, because the Harvest is come. And this brings me naturally to consider the *Second Head* of this Discourse ; *viz.* the Tempers of Mind which these Reflections ought regularly to raise up in us.

1st, THEN, Doth God alone crown the Year with his Goodness ? ought not we

we in continual Thankfulness to look up to Him on whom we depend for our daily Bread, and use those Blessings to his Glory, by which He largely provides for our Happiness? Every Meal we feed upon is an Entertainment sent from Heaven; and to abuse the Riches of God's Goodness is ungrateful: Luxury and Wantonness, Riots and Intemperances in the Use of this Bounty are the highest Indignities we can offer to the Almighty, who is a God of Purity and Holiness; a chearful Singleness of Heart, a thankful Enjoyment of whatever is given, and a modest Dependance upon Him for the Continuance of well-accepted Favours, are the Tempers of Mind which God's Benefactions ought to inspire. But moreover, the Largeness of the Provision which is here made for us, ought to carry up our Thoughts higher than the perishing Food of this Life: We are at present only upon our Journey, Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth, hastening towards our native Country, and if the Providence of God hath made our Accommodations upon this Road of Sorrow

in this Vale of Misery thus bountiful, comfortable and delightful, how much more shall we enjoy the Abundance of his Loving-kindness, and the Riches of his Goodness, when we have arrived at those joyful Mansions of Eternity *prepared for us in the highest Heavens?* These Thoughts will teach us the true Use of the good Things of this Life, Thankfulness in receiving, and Modesty in using them, and will particularly serve to excite that second Temper of Mind which I shall choose to insist upon, namely *Charity*.

THE Almighty, who is so liberal a Disposer of the good Things of this Life, certainly never intended to confine the abundant Encrease of vast Possessions to the sole Enjoyment of one Person, and exclude several others from the comfortable Supports of Nature. His Blessings are in common, and a free Communication of them is entirely expected from us. The Division of the World into Rich and Poor is highly providential, and several Gospel-Duties are grafted upon the Relation of them to one another,

another, but none is so much insisted upon as that of Charity : The Products of the Fruit of the Earth arise yearly, wherefore then should the rich Mammonist busy himself in laying up Fruits for many Years ; is not this a Distrust of God's Providence to ourselves, and an unjust Encroachment upon what is our Neighbour's ? Whatever exceeds the Measure of our own comfortable Subsistence, and the necessary Provision for our Families, becomes due to the Poor, who are destitute of the Blessings which we so largely enjoy ; for the Riches of God's Goodness are not to be hoarded up, but we ought to imitate the Almighty Benefactor, in freely and liberally dispensing the Overflowings of God's Blessings among our necessitous Brethren, and imparting those Comforts to others, which we abound in the Possession of ; and this Enlargement of our Souls will be a much greater Security to us for the Countenance of those Blessings, than the Enlargement of our Barns : He that trusts in the Multitude of his Riches, depends upon a Treasure *where Rust and*

Moth do corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal ; but to do good and to communicate are those well-pleasing Sacrifices, which derive a Blessing upon our Substance, and make it like the Loaves and Fishes in the Hands of our Saviour, even grow under Distribution, and enrich us with a more plentiful Remainder ; they will at least lay up for us an incorruptible Treasure in the highest Heavens, whither it shall be as impossible for a rich Man, or one that trusteth in Riches, to enter, as for a Camel to pass through the Eye of a Needle. It pleases the Almighty frequently to disappoint in the Course of his Providence, the Endeavours of the Covetous and Uncharitable, in growing exceeding Rich ; but at the best their Souls will be shortly required of them, and what will the Multitude of their Wealth avail, when the Riches of their Mercy, not of their Possessions, will be enquired into ? It will then be indifferent whether one or a thousand Acres yielded us their Fruits of Increase ; for he who now enjoys the most abundant Plenty, will then have nothing over,

over, and he who has at present the less Subſiſtance, will then have no Lack. Let us therefore be always *willing to diſtribute, glad to communicate* : The Earth, through God's Bleſſing, will thereupon bring forth abundantly ; and after the Poor hath eaten of our Subſtance, and been ſatiſfied, there will ever remain enough, more than enough, for us, and for all our Poſterity.

3dly and laſtly, SINCE we entirely depend upon the Almighty for the Supply of good things, we ought with all Humility, all Proſtrations of Worſhip, to beg of Him the Continuance of all temporal Bleſſings ; at this time particularly, when the Earth is now covered with all Variety of Fruits, all the Plenty of Proviſion, we ought with the Sincerity and Earneſtneſs of Prayer to implore his gracious Influences upon the enſuing Seasons. Plenty and Famine, Health and Sickneſs, are entirely in the Hands of Him, from whom proceed the Iſſues of Life and Death ; Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Wind and Storm, fulfil his Commands, who with the Word of his Power can ſcorch up with a burning Heat, or
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nip up with a sudden Frost, can parch through the Driness of the Season, or drown in the Floods of Rain, can blast with the Contagion, or pierce with the Sharpness of the Air, all the blooming Hopes of a whole Year's Encrease. It has pleased the Almighty sometimes in the Power of his Wrath, to *make a fruitful Land barren for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein*; how generally our Sins call aloud for Vengeance, is an Observation too obvious, too momentous to be disregarded; let us therefore endeavour by a general Repentance to ward off the Punishment due to so general a Corruption, and with hearty Prayers, as the Church more particularly at this Season of Recollection and Abstinence requires, entreat the Almighty, *that it may please Him to give to our Use the kindly Fruits of the Earth, so that in due time we may enjoy them*; more especially let us pray for the Encrease of his Grace as well as the Encrease of his Bounty, that we may use the same to his Glory, the Relief of those that are needy, and our own Comfort, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

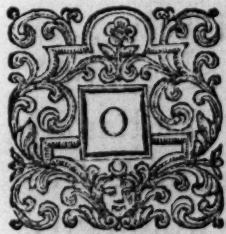


S E R M O N V.



JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed.



OUR Blessed Lord took frequent Opportunities of forewarning his Disciples of the Certainty of his Death, and the Violence of his Sufferings, but always took Care to close such heavy Forebodings with the comfortable Assurance of his Rising again the third Day from the Dead. Yet strange it is that the Disciples should discover such Depths of Dejection,

Dejection, such Wildness of Surprise, upon those Sufferings which our Lord had given them such full Reason to expect ; strange it is that their Surprise should even encrease upon them, and the News of our Lord's Resurrection, of which they had so distinct a Promise, should be receiv'd with so stupid an Incredibility. So foolish were they, *so slow of Heart to believe all, that not only the Prophets, but also that our Saviour himself had spoken, that the first Reports of his Resurrection appear'd to them as idle Tales ;* and after it had been confirm'd by other Witnesses also, the Sight of Him did nevertheless terrify and affright them, supposing they had seen a Spirit. *Thomas*, one of the Twelve, not being with them, when Jesus came, obstinately stood out against the Testimony of them all, and required the most sensible Demonstration before he would give his Assent to so strange an Article ; to this his Slowness of Belief our Blessed Lord graciously condescended, and at the second Appearance He made among his Disciples, calls upon *Thomas* to be convinced

vinced of his Resurrection, by those very Means which He himself required as a Proof of it ; *Reach hither thy Finger,* says He, *and behold my Hands ; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side ; and be not faithless, but believing.* Too glaring was this Evidence to admit of any farther Doubt, and the Sincerity of the Apostle broke forth into this short, but full of affectionate, Confession ; *My Lord and my God ! My Lord,* for that thou art the very *Jesus*, whose Disciple I am, my Senses do most demonstratively prove ; *and my God,* for my Faith does most strongly infer, that no Power less than Almighty, could be able to raise you up from the Dead ; this you foretold you yourself would do by your own Power, and this I now find most miraculously compleated. Thus was *St. Thomas* even overpowered by the Fulness of the Conviction, as tho' the over-curious Eye should presume to gaze directly at the Brightness of the Meridian Sun, and refuse to admit any Light, but that which comes in such Proportions as will dazle and confound the Faculties ; convinced

indeed he was, and convinced in his own Way, yet he was rebuked for not believing upon sufficient, tho' inferior, Evidence, than that which he had required. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.* This is the Connection of the Words before us with the Context: The Use I intend to make of them at this Time is,

I. To discover the different Degrees of Evidence, in which the Matters of Fact recorded in the Holy Gospel have been proposed to human Assent, and then we shall discover particularly the Grounds upon which our Belief is built; *some see and believe, and some believe, though they see not.*

II. I SHALL consider the superior Blessedness of those *who have not seen, and yet have believed*, above those, who require the Evidence of Sense to engage their Assent to these Articles of our Faith.

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1st, THEN, let us consider the different Degrees of Evidence, in which the Matters of Fact recorded in the Holy Gospel have been proposed to human Assent ; by which means we shall particularly discover the Grounds upon which our Belief of them is built, *some see and believe ; some believe, tho' they see not.*

ALL Evidence relating to Matters of Fact, is either receiv'd from our Senses, or from the Testimony of others ; the Evidence of Sense is certainly of an higher Nature than that other Sort, and consequently demands an higher Degree of Assent ; but Matters of Fact, which can in their own Nature be but once acted over, must be communicated to far the greater Part of the World under the latter sort of Evidence ; and here Circumstances must be taken into Consideration, and the Degrees of our Assent must be proportioned to the Degrees of the Evidence given us concerning them : Things which we ourselves see carry a greater Conviction than if we had them barely related to us ; those Things again, of which Multitudes of People bear concurrent Testimony, are

more credible than if a single Person only was to declare them. Truths indeed are all equally true, but the Circumstances under which they are proposed to our Assent, are various both in Kind and Degree : Every Truth will not admit of Demonstration, nor the same Truth be demonstrable to different Persons. When therefore we have arriv'd at the best, provided it be a sufficient, Evidence, that the Nature of things will allow, we ought to rest satisfied with the Discovery, and give our Assent to the Truths thus proposed to us. These Notions of Evidence and Assent are so obvious, so universally receiv'd in common Life, that Deviations from them would be construed the grossest Absurdities : To disbelieve that such Men as Authentick History informs us of, ever existed, because we did not see them, would be as ridiculous as to disbelieve the Existence of those Men ourselves have seen and been acquainted with ; because the Testimony concerning them is full and evincing, and indeed the only Proof we are able to procure ; and tho' this Sort of Evidence does not
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amount to an absolute Certainty ; yet a moral indisputable Certainty it is, such as leaves no Room for Doubts and Scruples to any unprejudic'd Person, it being a Certainty which results from the Testimony of those, whose Abilities and Sincerity we are satisfied about, who could not themselves be imposed upon, and who would not impose upon others. If we allow there may be a natural Possibility of being deceiv'd, yet if such a bare Possibility was always a sufficient Reason of Disbelieving, there would very few Circumstances of Life remain, which the Uncertainty of Diffidence would not cut off from the Pleasures and Advantages which a more implicit Faith supplies us with : All History of distant Times and Regions would be superfluous and impertinent, if Belief were confined to the narrow Sphere of Sense ; and human Intercourse would soon be stopp'd, if the Principle of trusting to nothing less than Demonstration was to take place. The Sum of what has been said amounts to thus much ; Matters of Fact must be proposed to our Assent two Ways, either

by our Senses, or by the Testimony of others : Both these Kinds of Evidence are good and satisfactory, and when either of them confirm the Truth of any Facts in the best manner, they ought entirely to be submitted to. Now to apply this to Religion : And here we need only consider the Matters of Fact which stand recorded in the History of our Blessed Saviour. If sensible Demonstration was universally necessary for Man's Belief of a crucified Saviour, the Advantages of such a Belief would, as Circumstances stand now, be almost universally destroy'd, and the Benefit of his Passion, and the Glories of his Resurrection, would require a more than daily Repetition of those mighty Transactions to procure their intended Effects : This Evidence was vouchsafed only to some few Eye-witnesses, who ministred to our Blessed Lord during his Life, and who saw and conversed with Him after his Resurrection ; and upon their Testimony we must depend for the Truth and Certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed. If we try their Evidence by
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Circumstances, which will make any Testimony full and convincing, we shall find that as they had a perfect Understanding of all things from the very first, they could not be impos'd upon themselves ; so likewise the Condition of those Witnesses, which doth evidently free them from any Suspicion of Insincerity, must oblige us to think that they did not impose upon the World ; they were the Holy *Jesus's* constant Attendants, and had not only Opportunities, but were even under a Necessity of seeing all the ancient Prophecies actually fulfilled in Him ; they heard his Instructions and Prophecies ; they saw his many and great Miracles : His Death and Suffering were too publick to be thought Forgeries ; and the Truth of his Resurrection was confirmed by many infallible Signs and Proofs : He shew'd himself alive again by being seen and felt, by eating and drinking, and conversing with them for forty Days together. Our Blessed Saviour did not indeed shew himself openly to all the People, but to chosen Witnesses only ; and this is so far from an Objection to

the Matter of Fact, that it is no more than what common Prudence would direct : The *Jews* had so obstinately withstood all the former Evidences our Blessed Saviour had given of his Divine Mission, that we have great Reason to think they would have resisted this Miracle also ; and the shewing himself alive would have added to their Condemnation rather than proved their Conviction : The Chief Priests and Elders at least, were enough perswaded of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection from the Account the Soldiers had given them, and thought it worth their While to bribe them to vent a Forgery, in order to prejudice the Report of it afterwards ; (but if our Blessed Lord had appear'd publickly, the *Jews* would probably with the Rage of Disappointed Wickedness have endeavoured to lay violent Hands upon Him ; our Saviour would then certainly have vanished out of Sight : The Consequence of which must have been Matter of wondrous Triumph to his Enemies ; they would have term'd it Magick and Collusion, and drawn over abundance of
 People

People to the plausible Belief of their having seen his Spectre or Apparition :) Our Blessed Lord was seen after his Resurrection by five hundred at once, too many to be deceived in so plain a Fact, tho' Men of the very weakest Capacities. Besides, we cannot suppose that illiterate, poor, undesigning Men should conceive so wild an Attempt, as that of imposing upon the whole World, much less that they should succeed in such an Attempt, and be able to enforce their Preaching by such extraordinary Methods of miraculous Cures, and speaking to all Languages ; certainly the God of Truth did support the Truth of their Ministry by the Mightiness of his Power, and through the Influence of his Grace brought over Crouds of Profelites. That so many Men should travel over the World to spread a Lye, and even court the most cruel Deaths in Confirmation of it, is an Instance of Hardiness too gross to gain Credit : Impossible it is that any Persons, after they had been so widely separated into all Parts of the Earth, should so circumstantially agree in their Relations

of any Facts, if those Facts were not true ; inconceivable it is, that none of those Tortures, which would have forced unassisted Sincerity to have abjured the Truth, should be able to extort from any of them the renouncing of a Lye. Thus able were the Apostles to give us the most certain Information of the things relating to Christ ; thus unquestionable were they in their Veracity, that their Senses were the Foundation of their Testimony, and their Lives were the Pledges of their Sincerity.

THE Apostles therefore are the Foundation upon which our Faith is built ; and that this their Evidence comes down to our Hands pure and uncorrupt, the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient Security ; that they were the Authors of those Writings, we have as great an Assurance as the Nature of things will allow ; for, to prevent the Corruption of Tradition, they themselves set in order a Declaration of those things which were most surely believed among them. These Writings were published in a Time when, if they had been false, they might easily have been
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been gainſaid ; the Time therein aſſign'd for our Lord's Reſurrection was then well and publickly known, and freſh in People's Memory, nor were the Things there mentioned done in a Corner ; many Copies and Tranſlations were taken from theſe Originals, and have been handed down to us in ſo pure a manner, that the general Agreement of them with one another is eſteem'd highly providential : This is the Reaſon of our Faith, and our Aſſent to thoſe ſacred Truths is in ſome meaſure better grounded than that of abundance of the firſt Chriſtians, whoſe Cities believed and repented upon the Preaching of one Apoſtle, but we enjoy the concurrent Teſtimony of many of them ; *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, all conſpire to eſtabliſh us in the Faith ; beſides the Completion of ſeveral Prophecies have ſince evinced the Truth of thoſe Doctrines which the Dependence of thoſe Prophecies might in ſome meaſure have kept in Suſpence : The Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the vaſt Succeſs in the Propagation of the Goſpel,

are pregnant Proofs to us of the Divine Origin of our most Holy Religion ; and Christianity has now stood the Test of almost two thousand Years Opposition : The Truth of its History has always rose superior to the Force and Stratagems of the Gates of Hell, which with Confidence we may now affirm, will never prevail against it : And the Purity of its Profession has always brighten'd under the most severe Trials of fiery Persecution ; so far is the Credibility of the Gospel-Testimony from decreasing in Proportion to the Distances of Time and Place, that the Extensiveness of its Propagation and the Length of its Continuance ought rather to enlarge and exalt our Belief of it.

I HAVE been somewhat large upon this Head, because the Free-thinking Principles, which our present Times do so perniciously indulge, make it necessary to establish the Credibility of the Holy Scriptures upon the same Foot with common Writings ; and the general and plausible Manner, in which our modern Deists spread the Poison of their Irreligious

ligious Sentiments, oblige us to bring those Questions into the Pulpits, which used to be chiefly confined to the Schools, and make them the necessary Mediations of the more illiterate, which used only to employ the Thoughts of the Learned. When therefore any Deist asks upon what Grounds we believe the History of the New Testament; our Answer is, it is a well-attested History; how do we prove such its Attestation? It is written with all possible Marks of Truth and Certainty; it was publish'd soon after the Facts there recorded were performed by Persons who could not but be well informed of the Things themselves, and who would not impose upon Mankind in the Relation of them: But how do we know they were thus written? Even as as we know who were the Writers of all other Books; they have come down to our Hands with the concurrent Testimony of all intermediate Ages, without any Suspicion of Deceit; if these Men think them not written by the Apostles, it is their Business to offer some Argument at least for such their wild Conception; for,

to

to disbelieve so obvious a Truth, purely because we have not sensible Demonstration of it, is an Argument, in Point of Reasoning, too weak to deserve an Answer ; but considering the Subject, which is thus triflingly handled, it is too impious to pass uncensured : This, as I just mentioned, was putting the Holy Scriptures upon the same Foot with common Writings ; and this Argument may serve to confute the Weakness of those Men who make Reason the top, the sole Rule of judging even in Spiritual Matters : But let a Person who is well disposed to Religious Knowledge attentively consider those Sacred Writings, and he will perceive that unaffected Simplicity of Narration, that majestick Plainness of Stile, that powerful Force of Instruction, that heavenly Purity of Doctrine, those blessed Tendencies of promoting God's Glory and Man's Happiness, that admirable Connection of every Part, and such-like Circumstances, to be such bright Indications of Truth, such glorious Strokes of Divinity itself, as set them above the Possibility not only of Imposture and

Falshood,

Falshood, but even of human Invention and Composition. These Sentiments will inspire a Faith modest and humble, but strong and lively, far superior to the stubborn Stupidity of Sense, the disputative Weakness of Reason; Faith founded upon Infallibility itself, not to be shaken by any Difficulties, or undermin'd by Science, falsely so called. These are the *Blessed* here spoken of in the Text; but upon what Grounds they are pronounced thus *blessed*, comes now in the

2^d Place to be considered; wherein I proposed to show the superior Blessedness of those *who have not seen, and yet have believed*, above those who require sensible Evidence to engage their Assent to the Articles of Faith. Articles of such Importance as those contained in the Gospel, ought regularly to engage our Closet-Application to discover the Truth of them; but Truths of such Comfort ought to engage our heartiest and most joyful Assent, when once discovered. The Nature of the Christian Dispensation absolutely required such Facts to be transacted as are there recorded: The
Incarnation

Incarnation of the Son of God was a Means absolutely necessary to bring about Man's Redemption ; by our Blessed Saviour's Death and Passion an Attone-ment was made for our Sins, and the Punishment due to their Demerits was removed ; by our Saviour's Resurrection a compleat Victory was gained over the great Enemies of Mankind, Sin and Death ; and a firm Belief of these and other Articles are made in their Nature, a Condition of our obtaining the blessed Effects of them. Now there is nothing in any of these Facts themselves which may not be thoroughly embraced, but the Duties consequent on our Belief are the mighty stumbling Blocks in our Way ; the *cru- cifying the old Man, the mortifying our Members, the dying unto Sin*, and the fitting loose to this World, are the Doubts and Scruples which clog and damp the Evidences afforded us : Passions and Pre- judices clap a Bias upon the Mind and in- cline it to believe contrary to the Dictates of right Reason and the common Rules of Judging. It is plain therefore that in Matters of Faith the Will must be pre-
pared

pared as well as the Judgment inform'd ; and the Blessedness here spoken of is consequent upon that Preparation of the Will, upon a pious Disposition of Mind to receive the sacred Truths of Divine Revelation, like little Children : He that requires sensible Evidence for his Conviction, and allows only so much Assent for so much Demonstration, believes not out of Virtue, but Force ; and such a necessary Faith can no more avail him than necessary Actions : Our Obedience to God is as much shewn by believing what he declares, as by doing what he commands ; and it is an Argument of no great difference to the Almighty to require, that whatever He proposes to our Assent should be fully proved. Our Religion would be unworthy its Author, if Sense and Reason were compleat Judges of the Truth of it : Such contracted Principles would be productive of no other than a narrow Degree of Happiness ; but Christianity, which is intended in an eminent Degree to enlarge and exalt our Soul, makes Faith the Principle of our Actions, and God's Word the

Foundation of our Faith. A true Believer therefore thankfully accepts the Doctrines of Christianity upon such Evidence as the Almighty hath vouchsafed, Reason directs him to the Discovery of what God hath revealed, and then his Faith takes place, and gives its entire Assent ; an humble Modesty, a tractable Meekness, are the Tempers of Mind which recommend God's Word to his Belief, and likewise his Belief to God's Acceptance ; and thus it is that his *Faith*, by being attended with the entire Choice and Approbation of the Mind, *is counted unto him for Righteousness*.

THAT sullen Obstinacy, which stands out against every thing less than Demonstration, it is to be feared, will act even against Demonstration ; that Hardness of Heart which prevents the renewing of our Minds by the Purity of Faith, will prevent likewise the renewing of our Lives by the Purity of Holiness. The *Jews* many of them were sufficiently persuaded of the Truth of our Lord's Resurrection, but wanted Integrity to confess him the Son of God, because they
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[III]

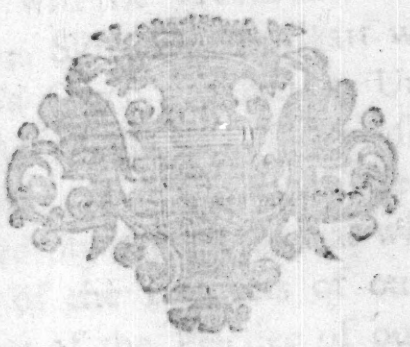
wanted Goodness to obey his Commandments ; for Virtue it is that must raise our Faith, and then reciprocally will our Faith exalt our Virtue. The History of the Blessed *Jesus* is not design'd for our Amusement, but for our Instruction and Amendment ; the Nature and Certainty of the Articles ought to affect us in the highest Degree, and a Life of true Holiness is the genuine Result of our being thus perswaded of the Truth of them, and affected by their Importance : Vastly superior are the Influences of religious above those of any common Faith, when improv'd through God's Grace into the very Substance of things hoped for, the very Evidence of things not seen : Thousands of People have with Patience run the Race of a persecuted Life in the steadfast Profession of this Faith, and with Joy embraced the Tortures of the most cruel Deaths in Confirmation of it ; not that the Terms of Credibility were greater then than they are now, we enjoy the same Clearness of Evidence which they did, and were we enrich'd with the same Degree of Sincerity, it would improve into

a Principle of equal Constancy and Fortitude. The Evidence indulged to us is sufficient for all the Purposes of Holy Living ; wherefore then should we expect or desire greater ? It was necessary for the Apostles to see, because they were appointed Witnesses of these Things : It is our Duty to believe without seeing, and therefore it is necessary for us not to see : Doubts indeed may arise in the Minds of the most sincere ; but the Circumstance which gave Occasion to the Words before us cannot but convince us, that God will be favourable to their Weakness ; Slowness of Heart will engage God's Grace to assist its Unbelief, but Hardness of Heart will presumptuously resist it : The Truths of the Gospel are so credibly set forth, that whenever we abate of the Firmness of our Faith, or fall short of the Practice of our Duty, it is not that the Evidence is insufficient, but our Application of it is not hearty and sincere : Would we then so perfectly and without all doubt believe, that our Faith in God's Sight may never be reprov'd, we must attentively consider whatever is contain'd

contain'd in Holy Scripture, we must modestly depend upon God for the Establishment of it in Truth and Holiness; remembring, that in this our State of Trial and Imperfection we can know *only in part*; that which is perfect will shortly appear, and then *that which is in part will be done away*: Through Faith alone we must pass unto Vision; and however to see may hereafter be our Happiness, to believe is at present our Duty.



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ST. JEROME

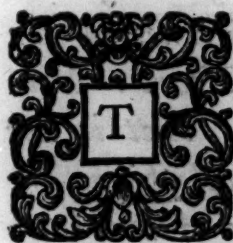


S E R M O N VI.



HEBREWS iv. 13. Latter Part.

— *All things are naked and open unto the Eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*



THE Apostle does here endeavour to excite the *Hebrews* to a strict Adherence and entire Submission to Christian Faith and Duty, as from other Motives, so particularly from the superior Dignity and Excellence of the Gospel above the *Jewish* Dispensation ; for if several of the *Israelites* did not enter into the Land of Promise

upon account of their Unbelief or Disobedience ; we Christians ought to take more especial Heed, lest after the same Example of Unbelief or Disobedience, we also fall short of the Promise of a more glorious Rest, even of the heavenly *Canaan* ; and to give this Motive its full Force, he does by a beautiful and expressive Allusion recommend to us the Attainment of Christian Purity, the Necessity of *presenting ourselves an holy Sacrifice without Spot or Blemish to that God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart : Neither is there any Creature, that is not manifest in his Sight ; but all things are naked and open unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.* The Terms which we translate *naked and opened*, are Metaphors taken from the Custom of the Priests in flaying and opening the Bodies of Beasts designed for Sacrifices, in order

to view with Exactness every Part of their Inside, and to examine narrowly whether they came up to the Standard of legal Soundness ; taking therefore along with us the Consideration of this Metaphor, the Passage of Holy Scripture now before us will evidently make up this Argument, Vain is the Presumption of sinning secretly against a God who knoweth our most hidden Thoughts and Intentions ; for the Word of God, by which we are to be judged, is far more quick in penetrating and discerning, far more exact in discriminating the inmost Re-cesses of the Heart, than the sharpest Instruments which the Priests make use of for dissecting the Bodies, for separating and exploring the Entrails of their devoted Sacrifices. There is not any Man whose whole Conduct is not manifest in his all-searching Sight ; but all things, tho' of never so close and recondite a Nature, are like the Inside of the Sacrifices before the Priests, made bare and laid open in the Eyes of him *with whom we have to do.* Which Words, as they

contain a full and plain Assertion of God's Omniscience, will lead us,

I. To a distinct Consideration of that Attribute, and then,

II. It will be obvious to reflect what Influence such a Consideration ought to have upon our Behaviour,

I. THEN, We are distinctly to consider this Attribute of God: *All things are naked and open unto the Eyes of Him with whom we have to do: All things are naked and open to his Eyes; i. e. He knoweth, He seeth all things.* The Imensity of the Divine Existence whereby He filleth all in all, and the Intelligence of his Nature, whereby He understandeth the Whole of every Accident, past, present, and future, are Circumstances which place us in the Fulness of God's Presence, and subject us to his continual Notice.

As to the Ubiquity of the Divine Presence, the Suffrages of Reason, but much more the Voice of Revelation, will inform us, that that vast Being, which only has Immortality, which is at once diffused thro' all Duration, is at once extended

tended likewise thro' the wide Abyſs of Space ; *Whither*, ſays the Royal Pſalmiſt, *ſhall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence ? If I aſcend up into Heaven, thou art there, if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea, even there ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy Right-hand hold me.* Thus we ſee no Place is ſo high, none ſo low, none ſo remote, none ſo obſcure, where the Divine Preſence does not pervade where his Providence is not exerciſed. *Am I a God at hand, ſays the Lord, and not a God afar off ? Can any hide himſelf in ſecret Places, that I ſhould not ſee Him ? ſaith the Lord ? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth ?*

LET then the Mind of Man, in the Strength and Quickneſs of Imagination, dart forth like the Light, and extend itſelf through the whole Sphere of the Universe ; yet farther, let it convey itſelf far beyond the Limits of the material World, and diffuſe itſelf through the wideſt Expanſion, that any Conceſſions

can reach ; yet infinitely short will all this fall of the Divine Immensity ; for God, who is all in all, is present at the same Time in every Part ; and in the Fulness of his Existence, He takes up the infinite Tracts of Space. We are apt in our Conceptions to confine the Almighty to the highest Heavens, to esteem that the proper Seat of his Residence, and to imagine Him present in other Places only by his Power and Influence ; but this is a partial Account of the Divine Ubiquity : The blissful Mansions of Eternity are indeed enriched with the open Splendor of his glorious Presence ; but with respect to his Essence, He equally fills his Throne, and his Footstool is equally present in every Place.

BUT God is likewise an infinitely intelligent Being, and his Inspection over us is as universal as his Presence with us, *God searcheth us out, and knoweth us ; He knoweth our down-sitting and our up-rising : He counteth our Steps, and spieth out all our Ways. There is not a Word in our Tongue, nor an Imagination in our Soul, but He knoweth it altogether : No*
 Action,

Action, no Thought can be with-holden from Him, who is the great Observer of Mankind, the nice Discerner of our Hearts. The Clouds of the most secret Obscurity cannot obstruct his all-piercing Sight ; *for the Darknefs hideth not from Him ; but the Night shineth as the Day ; the Darknefs and Light to Him are both alike :* The most specious Appearance of concealed Hypocrisy cannot deceive his discriminating Eye ; *for God hath not Eyes of Flesh, he seeth not by Appearance, as Man seeth, but trieth the very Heart and Reins.* Thus then, as well by the Ubiquity of God's Presence, as by the Intelligence of his Nature, *all things are naked and open to his Eyes.* But in order to give this Attribute of God's Omniscience its due Weight, we must consider the Force of these Words, *with whom we have to do.*

IF the Almighty was an idle Spectator only of Human Actions, disclaiming all manner of Concern for, and all future Relation to Mankind, the Notices of such an Intuition would affect us but little more than if he did not see them at all :

all : But since *his Eyes are every where beholding the Evil and the Good* ; beholding it as the Great Preserver to govern, as an impartial Judge to reward and punish the Sons of Men, we cannot fully satisfy our present Enquiries without considering Him yet farther under these two Relations.

It is the gracious Design of the Almighty by governing and regulating the Affairs of the World, to dispose all things in such a Way as is most conducive to his own Glory, and to our Happiness. God therefore observes all Actions and Motions of Mankind, that He may give them such advantageous Turns of Blessedness as may best answer the Ends of his Providence : It is even a Delight to the Holy One to do Good to them that fear Him ; and in the Dispensations of his Government He does so graciously and wisely improve every Circumstance of their Behaviour, that He makes all things work together for their Good. Those, whose Thoughts are not according to God's Commandments, and whose Hands deal with Wickedness, the Lord
observes

observes to disappoint their Devices ; he is always ready to secure his own Glory, and that is often best effected by the Destruction of those, who by the Unrighteousness of their Dealings endeavour to undermine it.

BUT again, this God, *to whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid*, is likewise the great Rewarder of Mankind. *I search the Heart*, saith the Lord by the Prophet *Jeremy, I try the Reins* ; but wherefore doth He search and try them ? He himself tells in the next Words ; *even to give to every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings* ; for at the great Day of Retribution God will bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil ; and He will accordingly deal out the glorious Recompence of Reward to them who do Good, and the full Vengeance of his eternal Wrath upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil.

THUS having by no more than a bare Comment distinctly enlarged upon the
Words

Words before us, and considered the Almighty as present with us in every Place, and inspecting the Whole of our Behaviour, inspecting it as the mighty Governor and tremendous Judge of the Sons of Men. Proceed we now in the second Place,

2d, To consider what Influences this Doctrine ought regularly to have upon our Behaviour.

AND in general we must infer the Necessity of observing that Rule which the Royal Psalmist lays down for the regulating his Life : *I have set the Lord always before me*, saith he ; and we ought, after so great and good an Example, to possess our Souls with such a lively and habitual Sense of this Article, as may effectually engage us to walk worthy of so awful a Presence, and unblamably under so accurate an Inspection. But to be more particular ; the God *with whom we have to do*, is, as we have already considered Him, the Great Governor of the World, the Great Rewarder of Mankind : The first of these Characters relates more immediately to this Life, the other to
that

that which is to come : When therefore we consider that this nice and intimate Observer of our Conduct and Behaviour is the sole Disposer and wonderful Preserver of all Things, we are in the highest Degree encouraged to repose ourselves with Joy and Comfort, under the Direction of his wise and benign Providence. It is for our Good that the Almighty watches over us ; and it is our Duty to render ourselves the proper Objects of so gracious a Tutelage. When we are said to be removed, to be cast out of the Divine Presence, with respect to this Life, we are not actually separated from such his Presence, but are deprived only of the Blessings of it : Through our Sins we forfeit all the favourable Regard, all the beneficial Influences of his Providence, and the Almighty watches over us, not to prosper, but defeat our Enterprises ; not to crown our Labours with Success, but to turn our very Successes into Disappointments ; but Peace and Safety are the Effects which God's Inspection has over them that put their Trust in, and pay Obedience to Him ;

a most

a most delightful Prospect it is, that during this the Course of our Pilgrimage here upon Earth, we have in God a certain Dependance upon Almighty Power for our Support, and upon Infinite Wisdom for our Guidance, but especially that we have these Attributes tempered with the indulgent Tendernefs of a most gracious Creator, *who as a Father pitieth his own Children, is merciful to them that fear Him.* When therefore our Actions are such as the Great Observer will think fit to accept and approve, we shall find Comfort in all his Dispensations, and shall bless and adore Him under all; whatever we enjoy, whatever we suffer, we are sensible, comes from the same bountiful Hand of Goodness; and as every thing that befalls us is sanctified on God's Part, so on ours it will meet with a grateful and chearful Acceptance: If worldly Blessings be our Lot and Portion, it will even double the Value of them to consider that they are no other than Marks of Favour from that God, *who hath Pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants*; that by the Divine Inspection over us we are enriched

enriched with his Mercies, and by his continual Presence with us we are encompassed about with Safety. If we receive the good Things of this World in a low Degree, or if it pleases the Almighty to embitter our Life with the Cup of Affliction, yet *God is our Hope and Refuge, a very present Help in Trouble.* Doth the Mouth of Malice open itself upon us, and the Tongue of Slander poison our Reputation, yet we may with Comfort appeal to Him, *who is intimate to all our Thoughts,* who knows the Sincerity of our Hearts, and the Innocency of our Actions : Is the Arm of the mighty Oppressor made bare against us, and doth the Hand of Violence lay heavy upon us ? yet He that is higher than the highest of Men is ever ready to assist and strengthen us, and in his own good Time to deliver us out of all our Calamities. Thus under all Dispensations of Providence the Consideration of the Divine Omnipresence will engage us with cheerful Confidences to submit ourselves and our Cause to the Blessed Will of that gracious Governor, who may indeed inflict

flit the Chastisements of a tender Father, but will be faithful to recompense those very Sufferings with the more liberal Bounty of a gracious Rewarder; and this suggests to us that other Character under which we considered the Great Inspector of all our Actions. Now the setting God before us under the Character of our Great *Rewarder*, will be found an excellent Means of our avoiding all manner of Sin.

SIN is of a Nature truly odious and mischievous; and under both these Circumstances the Sense of God's Presence will check every Tendency towards the Commission of it: Men generally fly to Privacies and Solitude for the Gratification of their Appetites, and as much as possible avoid every Witness of their Vices: The meanest of Men will awe us under the strongest Temptations; the very Light of the Sun is too glaring to be trusted with secret Offences, and the Darkness of the Night is sought for to conceal the Foulness of our Wickedness; but what Witness can be so awful, and of such Importance, as that Holy and Great God,

who

who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity ; who is the most powerful Avenger of all Unrighteousness ? It is the Principle of Atheism to endeavour, if possible, to exclude God from the World, that Men may commit all manner of Sin ; but this is generally done in effect by excluding Him from our Thoughts ; it being the same thing to us, with respect to our Behaviour, whether God be removed far from us, or whether, tho' He be ever essentially present with us, we do not suffer such his Presence to influence our Conduct. Accordingly we find that the Holy Scripture marks out the Wicked under the Character of those *that forget God* ; because any thing of a lively Remembrance of that tremendous Being would curb the most forward Propensity to transgress his Commands. Shame indeed is the more ingenuous Method of deterring us from Sin ; but if that will not prevail, the Fear of Punishment will force our Avoidance. Let us suppose a Man upon the Brink of Eternity with all the terrible Apprehensions of eternal Torments about him ; or let us suppose

him made sensible of the Divine immediate Presence by some visible Marks of his Glory, and we may venture to affirm how little the most powerful Temptation is likely to affect him. And this is the Case of those who have an habitual and lively Sense of God's Presence with, and Inspection over us ; for they consider Him as ever before their Eyes, arrayed with the Awfulness of his eternal Majesty, the Severity of his Almighty Justice, observing every Circumstance of their Life, searching every Thought and Inclination of their Heart, weighing every Action in the Balance, and preparing Judgment for all the Sons of Men. And impossible it is for Persons under these Sentiments to fall into any of Satan's Delusions ; and every Act of Sin, how beautiful soever it might otherwise appear, will under these Circumstance be found deformed and dreadful. Now this affecting Sense of God's Presence is equally strong in every Place, because the most private Offences are open to his all-searching Eye. When therefore the mighty Tempter pursues us to our Retirements,

ments, and prompts us to transgress under the Appearance of greater Secrecy and Security, then particularly let us remember, that the Closet is to God as the House-Top, the Darkness even as Noon-Day, and that the Almighty is a more intimate and tremendous Witness of our Iniquity than if thousands of our Fellow-Creatures were Spectators of it.

BUT, 2^{dly}, this Sense of God's Omniscience, as He is our Great Rewarder, is an excellent Incitement to our attaining the Purity of Christian Holiness.

Walk before me, says GOD to Abraham, *and be thou perfect* : So that there is a Connection between the one and the other ; and by walking before God, *i. e.* by behaving ourselves as Persons under God's continual Notice, alone it is that we shall arrive at true Perfection ; for if God, who is the bountiful *Rewarder* of all his Servants, be constantly ready and present with us, observing every Motion and Inclination of the Heart ; what more affecting Inducement to a sincere and entire Obedience ; if we have any *Respect to the Recompence of the Reward*, how shall

we endeavour to keep up our Pretensions, to heighten and advance such our Reward, by improving in every Virtue, and growing up in every Divine Grace, not one righteous Thought or pious Inclination, not one Act of Devotion, or Aspiration after Heaven, will be like Water spilt on the Ground, but all Works of Faith; our Patience of Hope, and Labour of Love, every Circumstance of godly Obedience will be remembered to our eternal Glory and Happiness. So that this Argument takes in not only the overt Acts of our Duty, but extends to the Sincerity of our Thoughts and Intentions; God, who to reward, observes them both with the Eye of Jealousy, and our secret Imaginations are as open in his Sight as our most publick Actions. Since Purity of Heart can alone recommend us to the Divine Acceptance, and Purity of Heart ought as naturally to flow from the habitual Sense of God's continual Notice and Inspection over us as Purity of Action. Thus then, by setting God always before us, by making the Almighty, as He is the constant Observer, so

likewise the habitual Object of our Thoughts, the End of all our Actions : He will be ever on our Right-hand, that we shall not fall ; his Providence will support the natural Man, his Grace will support the moral Man ; and by thus making his Essential Presence familiar to us here, we can alone secure to ourselves an Admittance to view Him Face to Face hereafter, and make his glorious Presence pleasurable to all Eternity.

BUT, Good Lord ! how dreadful is the Thought of our standing continually in thy View ! how awful is every Place rendered by thy Presence ! in thy Sight the Heavens themselves are not clean : How abominable then shall sinful Dust and Ashes appear before thee ! Thou searchest our Hearts, thou triest our Thoughts, but, good Lord ! while thou thus searchest, purify ; be present with us by thy Essence ; so, by thy Grace, look well if there be any Way of Wickedness in us, that thou mayest reform it ; make us as thou wilt be graciously pleas'd to accept, and then we shall dare, we shall rejoice to approach thee ; purify us by the In-

fluences of thy Holy Spirit, and *we shall be clean*, wash us in the precious Blood of thy dear Son, and *we shall be whiter than Snow*. Then will Innocence take off the Dreadfulness of thy Sacred Majesty ; for the Brightness of thy Eternal Glory will not amaze those whom thy Grace has sanctified, for to them *in thy Presence is the Fulness of Joy, at whose Right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore.*



SERMON

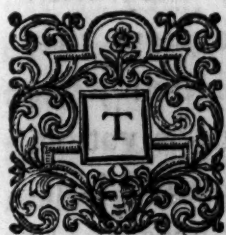


S E R M O N VII.



EPHES. iv. 8. Latter Part.

— gave Gifts unto Men.



THE Psalm, from whence these Words are taken, is a Psalm of high Jubilee, describing a Victory of great Might, a Triumph of great Glory. These Atchievements are attributed to God himself, and the Characters of infinite Power and Majesty, under which they are represented to us, well besuit the Dignity of the Divine Being : The *vanishing of the Enemies like Smoke*, the *dissolving of them like Wax before the*

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Fire ;

Fire, the Shaking of the Earth and Trembling of the Heavens, the Leapings of the Mountains, the Attendance of twenty thousand Chariots, even thousands of Angels ; the Divine Presence abiding with them ; the Israel of God being thereby loaded with Benefits, being purified like the Wings of a Dove, and becoming as white as Snow in Salmon, are Circumstances too grand and beneficial to be the Description of Human Victories and Triumphs ; they naturally carry our Thoughts up to those vast Transactions, whereunto Revelation in the Words before us distinctly refer them ; they with strong and clear Prophecy declare that entire Conquest, which the Blessed Jesus gain'd over the Enemies of our Salvation, that Triumph, whereby He exalted himself far above all things, whereby He took Possession of his heavenly Throne, established his Dominion for ever in Glory, and poured down the Gifts and Graces of his holy Spirit upon his Church militant here on Earth.

THE Apostle is here exhorting his *Epheſian* Converts to keep the Unity of the Spirit

Spirit in the Bond of Peace; i. e. to do all in them lay to preserve that Peace and Order which Christ hath established in his Household the Church: And this He enforces from the Nature of Christ's Church, as it is a Society; for it is one Body actuated by one Spirit; all its Members have *one common Hope of their Calling*, are all subject to *one Lord*, do all profess *one Faith*, are all initiated into this Society by *one Baptism*, have all *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all*. But tho' the Church be one and the same in the general, yet the particular Members of it are severally enrich'd with different Gifts and Graces; unto every one of us, saith the Apostle, *is given Grace, according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ*. Wherefore, He saith, i. e. accordingly the Spirit of God in Prophecy declared, *when He ascended up on High, He led Captivity Captive, and gave Gifts unto Men*. Which Words plainly allude to the Practice of earthly Princes and Generals, who, upon their Return Home after any signal Victory, enter their Cities
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in Triumph, leading the Enemies captive, and scattering Money among their own Subjects who attend them in great Crowds on such Occasions, rejoicing with them in their Glory, partaking with them in their Spoils. In like Manner, but in a Degree infinitely more exalted, did the Blessed *Jefus* enter the *Heavenly Jeruſalem*, after He had approv'd himſelf the Lord ſtrong and mighty in Spiritual Conflicts ; the Gates of the Holy Places not made with Hands lift up their Heads, and the everlaſting Doors of the higheſt Heavens were lifted up to give Admiſſion to the King of Glory : He had ſubdued every ghofly Adverſary, and now He return'd to his Father loaded with Victories, crown'd with Honours, leading Sin and Satan captive by his triumphant Aſcenſion into Heaven, and ſcattering among his Subjects here on Earth all thoſe Spiritual Bleſſings which by his mighty Conqueſts he had obtained for us.

It is proper barely to obſerve, that in the 1xviiith *Pſalm*, from whence theſe Words are taken, it is ſaid *He receiv'd Gifts for Men* ; here, that *He gave Gifts*
unto

unto Men: Which Words do not contradict one another, since his receiving Gifts for Men plainly implies that He received with an Intent to give ; and that what He purchased by his Victories, and receiv'd as the Reward of his Labours, He graciously distributes among us, and applies to our Service and Happiness. Thus stand the Words with respect to the Context, and the general Meaning of them, and will furnish out proper Matter for our present Discourse under the two following Heads, by considering,

I. What those *Gifts* more particularly are which it is said our Blessed Saviour gave unto Men ; and,

II. WHAT our Duty is with respect both to the Reception and Application of them.

Now as this Victory and Triumph are entirely of a Spiritual Sort, so likewise the *Gifts* which were dispensed on that Occasion, and are, as was before mentioned, in general, the blessed Influences of God's Holy Spirit : And those Influences

Influences are more particularly divided into his extraordinary and ordinary Operations : The former of these were vouchsafed only to the first Ages of the Christian Church ; the latter are what the Christian World always enjoys. The Apostles were separated out for an extraordinary Task, and could perform it no otherwise than by extraordinary Means. Our Blessed Lord did indeed give them Authority to plant the Gospel in all the World at his Departure, but commanded them to stay at *Jerusalem*, 'till they were endued with Power from on High : That Power was wonderfully imparted to them, as upon this Day, and they were immediately made equal to their mighty Task : They spake with Tongues as the Spirit gave them Utterance ; *i. e.* without the tedious Instructions of Conversation or Grammar-Rules : They were in an Instant possessed of the Habit of speaking several Languages ; so that with Ease they could communicate to all the Inhabitants of the Earth the exalted Truths of the Gospel, and preach Salvation to all the Ends of the World :

Fifteen Nations were at that Time gathered together at *Jerusalem*, and heard them speaking in their own Tongues, wherein they were born, the wonderful Works of God : And as the Holy Spirit had given them a Mouth, so He likewise gave them Wisdom : They were inspired with a full and clear Knowledge of the Sacred Doctrines they preach'd to the World, far above the slender Improvements of Natural Sense, and without the slow Deductions of common Reason. In a Moment of Time they understood all Mysteries, and received the Fulness of Divine Truth : What they learn'd was not conveyed to them by outward Representations or gross Images, but applied to their Understanding by the naked and immediate Communications of the Holy Ghost himself ; taught they were without any Possibility of being misinform'd, and what they preached to others is the infallible Standard of Divine Truth to all Generations. The Word of God thus applied was *quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged Sword* ; the Disciples immediately were enabled to instruct the whole

whole World ; their Audience were prick'd in their Hearts, and at their very first Preaching, in one Day *there were added to the Christian Church about three thousand Souls.* But the Influences of the Holy Ghost did not rest here, He likewise indued them with the Power of working Miracles to evince the Divinity of their Doctrines ; *many Signs and Wonders were done by the Hands of the Apostles,* and in Consequence thereof *there were daily added to the Church such as should be saved :* These Gifts were all absolutely necessary to enforce and give Credit to the Truth of the Gospel upon the first Propagation of it, but ceased in great measure with the Apostles, and as soon as the Gospel was well established, were entirely withdrawn. But we may from hence draw these comfortable Conclusions, that the Gospel which is contained in their Writings is the infallible Word of God himself, delivered in the most pure and authentick Manner, dictated by the Blessed Spirit of Light and Truth, and wrote by the Hands of those who had the most intimate

mate Conferences, the most naked Communications with that Divine Author. We are likewise hereby assured of the actual Descent and Continuance of the Holy Ghost upon us : Our Blessed Lord promised us that Second Comforter, and promised likewise that He should *continue with us always, even to the End of the World.* The former Part of the Promise we find hath been most undeniably compleated, and the other Part is thereby sufficiently ascertained to us. If the first Communications of the Holy Ghost with Man had been no fuller than those we now enjoy, we should never be able to convince Gainsayers of His real Descent : Mighty even yet are his Operations, but not perceptible by any but those who immediately feel them : But the visible Manner in which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and the many miraculous Effects of it, put this Doctrine out of all Dispute. Impossible it was that by any other Means than those of its all-powerful Influences, weak, illiterate Men should in a Moment become so profound in Learning, so universally skill'd
in

in Languages, and particularly should become able to work Miracles. Any Forgery might easily have been detected by the great Concourse that was at that Time at *Jerusalem*; and absurd it is to imagine that their Eyes and Ears could in such plain and palpable Facts be so grossly impos'd upon. The Power of the Most High must certainly be there displayed, where Art and Nature is so far out-stripp'd; where the foolish Things of this World do so greatly confound the Wise, and the weak Things do so gloriously overpower the Mighty. Moreover, we may be perswaded from this important Article of the Sufficiency of God's Grace, and the Readiness of the Holy Ghost to grant us all the needful Supplies of Comfort and Assistance. The same Promise which was made to the Apostles was made also to us, and we may equally rely upon the Goodness of God for the full Completion of it. The Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit are not so largely dispensed to us, as they were in the first Ages of Christianity; but the Exigencies of our Time are far from requiring

quiring them : What is abundantly sufficient for us, would have been very deficient to them ; and what was barely sufficient for them, is by no means necessary for us : To what purpose, *ex. gr.* should the Most High indulge his Church in the extraordinary Gift of Tongues, since the Sound of the Gospel has already gone out into the Ends of the Earth ; and the Apostles, tho' dead, do nevertheless by their Writings continue to speak to us, in almost every Language ? Wherefore should the Gift of Prophecy continue to instruct us by immediate Inspirations, since the Will of God once reveal'd has been handed down in so full and plain a Manner by the Holy Scriptures ? Or of what further Use would Miracles be, since the Doctrines they were design'd to enforce are so fully established, and even they themselves may be referr'd to from Records of undoubted Credit. The Holy Ghost in short is neither so large nor open in his Operations now, as in the Apostolical Age, because there is manifestly not the same Occasion for it ; but from the extraordinary Effects of his Grace and

Power then, we may fairly conclude his Influences will be ever as great as the present Circumstances of Affairs will require.

PROCEED we now in the 2d Place to consider the other Sort of Gifts which are universally vouchsafed to the Christian Church, *viz.* the ordinary Operations of his Grace, Illumination and Sanctification.

THE State of Nature is generally in the Holy Scripture call'd a State of Darkness ; and, on the contrary, the State of Grace is call'd that of Light. Here we enjoy all those beautiful and comfortable Scenes of Things, which can be conveyed to us by so bright and glorious an Image. Our Souls are no longer perplex'd with Errors and Uncertainties ; no longer tortur'd with Anxiety and Despair, but we walk in the open Light of the Son of Righteousness : Our Salvation is continually before our Face ; and the Way to attain it is plain and obvious. The Holy Scriptures, which were the immediate Dictates of the Holy Ghost, *are a Lantern to our Feet, and a Guide*

to our Paths ; they are the Treasure of Divine Knowledge deliver'd to us in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and are abundantly able to make us wise unto Salvation. But besides this outward Converse, there is likewise an internal Communication, whereby it takes off those Clouds from the Understanding, and clears up those saving Truths of the Gospel, to enable us more fully to apprehend the Force of them. To Him are owing all the Comfort and Pleasure we receive from the affecting Sense of any Part of our Religion. To Him it is owing, that we can with Satisfaction contemplate the Eternal Godhead, in the Glory of his Attributes, and the Excellency of his Perfections; and understand what Service is most acceptable to so adorable a Being ; to Him that we can with Raptures of Joy meditate upon the consummate Work of our Redemption, and be instructed in all that is necessary on our Part to reap the Advantage of it. He informs us what is the true End of our Being, wherein our main Happiness consists, and what are the proper Means of attaining it.

Whatever a Christian does or ought to know for his Soul's Health are the gracious Influences of his Communications with us. The Arts indeed which the Holy Ghost makes use of to fill our Souls with such saving Truths, are various and unaccountable ; yet since our Souls are naturally full of Darkness, and over-run with Ignorance, every Glimpse of Light, every Dawning of wholesome Instruction must be derived from that Fountain of all-illuminating Grace, which can alone shew us the true Path of Life, and guide us therein with his Counsel. But the Second Operation of the Holy Ghost is that of Sanctification ; for in vain would the Blessed Spirit instruct us in our Duty, if He did not likewise enable us to perform it : We have Instances too frequent and flagrant to convince us that the Corruption of fall'n Man will act against Knowledge ; and to his Divine Inspirations alone it is owing that we will and do, as well as know, the Things that make for our Peace. The Effects which are wrought upon the Soul by his gracious Influences, are in the Holy

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Scripture call'd Regeneration, or a Second Birth ; when all the Faculties of the inner Man have left their free and natural Power of acting through Sin ; then does the enlivening Spirit of God, as it breathed into Man's Nostrils the Principles of Natural Life, likewise inspire his Soul with those of a Spiritual Life ; quite different Sentiments are here infused, and all our Thoughts and Actions turn upon new Principles : He gives a Check to those Seeds of Corruption, which grow up in our polluted Soul, and warms us with virtuous Suggestions ; these Suggestions He cherishes and improves into pious Resolutions, and those Resolutions into godly Habits ; He melts down the Hardness of our Hearts, and rectifies the Perverseness of our Will : He reduces the Wildness of our Affections to a peculiar Compliance with the Will of God, and turns the Fierceness of our Appetites into the Mildness of a virtuous Subjection : He subdues every Inclination to Vice, and kindles every Desire of Virtue : He enforces all the Motives to Godliness in the Fulness of their Strength, and dis-

poses us to perform the Means of it in the Sincerity of a pious Zeal : He gives a spiritual Discernment of the whole Gospel-Covenant, and powerfully engages our fulfilling the Terms of it : He spiritualizes all our Thoughts, and sanctifies all our Actions ; in every Circumstance He *renews a right Spirit within us*, and purifies our Souls, *even as our Father which is in Heaven is also pure.*

THESE are the Blessed Effects of the Holy Spirit's operating upon our Souls ; and what a comfortable Change is thereby made ? We pass from the disconsolate Gloominess of uncertain Wandrings, to the Brightness of settled Principles of acting ; from the Extravagancies and Misery of a sinful and corrupted Nature, to the Regularity and Comfort of Piety and Virtue ; from the Melancholy of Despair, and the dreadful Apprehensions of eternal Vengeance, to the glorious Prospect of an happy Eternity.

THESE then are the Gifts which the Blessed Jesus gave unto Men : He endued his Apostles with Power from on High for the Establishment of his Church,
and

and by the extraordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit, enabled them to speak with Tongues, to prophesy, to work Miracles : But his Goodness extends to every one of his Subjects ; the ordinary Operations of God's Holy Spirit are Benefits which He is continually pouring down upon every Member of his Church ; and whatever Advances are made by any one of them in Holiness, whatever Virtues we bring to Perfection, whatever Progress we make towards Eternal Happiness, they are entirely the Effects of Christ's Merits : He departed that He might send the Comforter unto us, for 'till Jesus was exalted, the Holy Ghost was not given ; these Gifts and Graces were the Purchase of his most precious Blood, the Attainments of his Victories, and were therefore made the necessary and immediate Consequences of his triumphant Ascension into Heaven.

I PROCEED now, in the second Place, to consider what our Duty is with respect both to the Reception and Application of these Gifts ; with respect to the Reception of them, we must seek them by

fervent Prayer, and by the Use of outward Ordinances. *If ye, being Evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children ; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.* God's Grace is the reserv'd Portion of God's Children ; and Devotion alone it is which evidences such a Dependence upon the Almighty as becomes the Relation of Children to their Parents ; Devotion bears Testimony to our own great Insufficiency, and the extreme Necessity we lie under of Assistance from on High. Prayer is intended not to bring God acquainted with our Necessities, for He knows them long before we ask, but that we ourselves should be duly sensible of our own Wants and Infirmities, and of God's Power and Goodness to relieve and assist them ; yet we may be engaged to *give the Lord the Honour due unto his Name ;* and that we may make Him all in all, as with respect to our Happiness, so likewise with respect to our Love and Adoration. What we call the Gifts of Nature and Fortune come indeed alike to all, but the good and perfect Gift of
 God's

God's Grace, which is from above, falleth not down like the Rain *upon the Just and the Unjust*; it is the promised Reward of true Devotion, because true Devotion alone it is whereby the Soul rises up to God in Dependence and Gratitude, and which will engage us to apply those Portions of Grace to the Purposes of Christian Holiness for which they were given. Again, We must seek after God's Grace by the Use of outward Ordinances; *viz.* the Ministry of God's Word, frequenting the Publick Service of the Church, the Use of the Blessed Sacraments, &c. It hath ever pleased the Almighty to annex the Communication of his Holy Spirit to some outward Instances of Worship, and that for many wise and gracious Purposes, because thereby we are the better enabled to worship both in Body and Soul, the Face of Religion is much better kept up in the World, the substantial Service of Spiritual Devotion will become more sensibly our Duty, and will not be so likely to suffer through ungrateful Forgetfulness.

THUS

THUS far with respect to the Reception of God's Grace : As to the Application of it ; *First*, We ought to have our Souls fill'd with all Thankfulness to that adorable Being from whom we receive it. *Secondly*, We ought to make it the Means of our improving in all Christian Virtue and Holiness.

1. IT seems to fare with God's Dispensations in the Moral and Divine, as in the Natural World ; in both Cases his extraordinary Operations fix our Thoughts so intently upon Him, that in his Ordinary Operations we are apt to overlook and neglect Him. When we consider, *ex. gr.* the miraculous Encrease of *five Barley-Loaves and two small Fishes*, whereby five Thousand were fed, and *twelve Baskets full were taken up*, our Thoughts bear immediate Testimony to that God by whose Power and Goodness this Miracle was wrought ; but how rarely doth the much greater Indulgence of our Heavenly Father engage our Adoration towards that Providence whereby Millions of Millions are daily fed by his continual Bounty ?

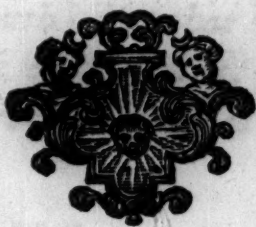
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2. IN like Manner, when the Gift of the Holy Ghost was attended with extraordinary Demonstrations of outward Power, the Influences of God's Holy Spirit were readily acknowledged and thankfully receiv'd ; but since these Demonstrations have ceased, Men have been apt to disregard these Influences in general to a Degree almost of Disbelief ; but let us consider, that the former Circumstances were necessary only for the Infant State of Christ's Church ; but the latter will always be necessary ; and therefore from the Nature of the Thing, but much more from the Promise of God himself, we may be assured they will be always largely supply'd, and if supply'd, certainly by the same Means now whereby they were supply'd formerly : The Power of working Miracles and such-like in the Apostles Days, was not imparted to all those who might truly be said to receive the Holy Ghost ; the Power of inward Holiness, the Graces of Gospel-Righteousness, the Blessings of an enlightened Mind and purified Heart, were the much more general and much more beneficial Influences
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of God's Spirit : These were the Gifts which were poured down upon true Believers by the Hands of the Blessed Apostles ; these are likewise the Gifts which the Successors of the Apostles are made the Instruments of conveying to those Persons who are duly qualified for their Reception, neither they nor the Blessed Apostles themselves could be said to give ; they laid on their Hands, and God alone it is that gives his Holy Spirit. But were Men as duly prepared now to receive Grace as they were in the Apostles Days, the same Portions of Ordinary Grace would certainly be supply'd by the same Means now as were then. We have in Holy Scripture the most express Assurances that Grace will be constantly supplied to us in full Proportion to the Improvements we make of former Grace, inasmuch as in this our State of Probation we must be continually growing up into Glory, and as God's Grace encreases upon us, so likewise the Fruits of it, such as Peace, Love, Joy, and all other Christian Virtues ; and these Fruits can alone be brought to Perfection by our
own

own regular and zealous Endeavours to refine and raise our Souls into a still more pure and elevated State of Gospel-Righteousness.

Now to God the Father, who will receive us into his Glory, to God the Son, who hath redeemed by his Blood, to God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies by his Grace, be all Honour and Glory for ever. Amen.



SERMON

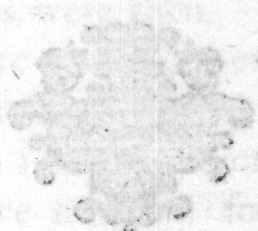
own regular and business Endeavour to
refine and raise our Souls into a still
more pure and elevated State of Gospel-
Righteousness.

It is to God the Father, who will not
leave us in our Sin, to God the

Son, who has redeemed us by his blood,
and to God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies

us by his Grace, be all Honour and Glory
for ever, Amen.

And thus we conclude this Sermon with
the following Verse.



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the following Verse.

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the following Verse.

And thus we conclude this Sermon with
the following Verse.

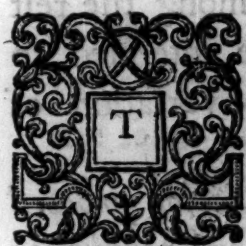


SERMON VIII.



EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth; but that which is good for the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.



THE Apostle having declared the Dignity and Advantages of that strict Union which is betwixt Christ and the Members of his Church, infers the Obligation his *Ephesian* Converts lay under of walking worthy of

of that Vocation, wherewith they were called ; of walking, not as the other Gentiles walk, or as they themselves, while Gentiles, did walk : He exhorts them, that they would now put off concerning former Conversation the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts ; that they would be renew'd in the Spirit of their Mind ; and that they would put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness. The Apostle then proceeds to warn them against some particular Sins, which have no Connection with one another, and therefore may be each treated of without any immediate Regard to the Context ; such as Lying, Stealing, immoderate Anger, Malice, and some others. The Words of the Text stand among the rest of these Precepts, and are intended to regulate the common Conversation of Men with one another.

Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth. The Word *corrupt* is frequently thought in this Place to signify filthy or obscene ; but it may perhaps be

more rightly supposed to intend, either rotten, and so to be Part of the Allegory, that is, carried on by the Term *edifying*, which in its first Sense signifies building; and *corrupt Communication* may therefore design any Sort of Discourse which is contrary to Spiritual Edification, as rotten Materials are very improperly employed in litteral Buildings; or else it may mean unfavory, in opposition to what the Apostle calls in another Place *Speech seasoned with Salt*; i. e. such Speech as is both wholesome and grateful, whereby Instruction or Edification is convey'd, and convey'd in an agreeable Manner.

But that which is good for the Use of Edifying. Edification is a Spiritual Term, and generally signifies Improvement in Christian Virtue; but here it is express'd, as tho' it intended, principally indeed Improvement in a Spiritual Sense; but at the same time it may include any other Sort likewise of unprofitable and useful Improvement.

That it may minister Grace unto the Hearers. The Term Grace may be interpreted in a larger Sense than it usually

is, and be supposed to signify Christian Chearfulness as well as Christian Purity ; so the same Apostle uses it in another Place, *let your Speech be with Grace, seasoned with Salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every Man* ; where it is plain we are commanded to accommodate ourselves to all Men in our Speech, and how accommodate ourselves to them otherwise than by the engaging and agreeable Manner of our Speech ?

THE Precept therefore will stand thus ; Let *no corrupt*, no rotten, no unedifying, no unfavory Communication *proceed out of your Mouth* ; but let your Discourse be calculated for Improvement, and calculated in such a Manner, that it may minister both Profit and Pleasure to those you converse with.

FROM which Words thus explain'd, we may take Occasion to consider, how common Conversation ought to be regulated, so as to take a profitable and improveable Turn : A Topick this, far from being below the Regard of the Pulpit, since Conversation is what all Mankind run into, as the most agreeable Circum-

Circumstance of Life ; and as Dangers always attend what is agreeable, Conversation abounds with them : The Profane, the Dissolute, the Uncharitable, do all make their Discourse favour strongly of their particular Dispositions ; and thro' that natural Proneness which Men bear to Sin, through the Influences of bad Example, and the familiar and entertaining Lights wherein Men love to place their favourite Vices, we find that Sin insinuates wonderfully by common Discourse, and Men are much more talk'd into Wickedness, than betray'd into it any other Way ; and Dangers in this respect are more particularly dangerous, because Mischiefs, like Blessings, by being common, become disregarded : Men fall into Conversation, as into an obvious engaging Office, and it is an Affair so much of course, that they never attend either to its Nature or its Consequences.

Now the Whole of this Subject seems included in the *Matter* of our *Conversation*, and the *Manner* of it ; the *Matter* of it ought to be calculated chiefly for Use, the *Manner* of it for a more en-

gaging Conveyance of that useful Part. As to the Manner of conversing, it is so entirely prudential, it depends so very much upon Custom and Fashion, upon the Variety of Tempers, and the Difference of Circumstances, that it is impossible to consider it minutely within any Compass ; it may only be remark'd in general, that the best Rule for conversing is to study the Turn of our own Nature ; and to make that as universally agreeable as we can, to fall in with other Persons Tempers and Inclinations, as far as we can with Innocence and Discretion, and to give all our Discourse such a Tincture of Sincerity and Chearfulness as may procure for us both the good Opinion and the good Affections of those we converse with. It is the *Matter* therefore of *Conversation*, which will be at present consider'd ; and that for Method's sake, may be brought under the Three following Heads, that which does more immediately relate to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourselves* ; more immediately, because all Conversation must concern ourselves, as Actors in it ; yet for Distinction's sake,

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that which more immediately relates to *God* may be call'd *Religious* ; that which more immediately relates to our *Neighbour*, may be call'd *charitable Discourse* ; and all other Discourse whatever may be said more immediately to relate to *Ourselves*.

Ist, THEN, of *Religious Discourse* : *Religion* certainly is the most excellent Topick for Conversation, but withal the least regarded, and might justly challenge to have very much said of it here, because so very little is said of it out in the World ; there cannot be a greater Mark of an universal Decay of Piety than the Neglect of such Discourse in common Conversation : We find enough of Religion in Men's Heads to minister Strife and Dispute, but not enough of it in their Hearts to engage them to think of it affectionately, and to speak of it with Zeal and Reverence : The Charge of Hypocrisy and Stiffness runs so high against Religious Talkers, that give but a Man that Character, and you will go near to ruin his Credit in Life ; he will be thought unfit for Society, either be-

cause he is dull, or dishonest, and must therefore be a worthless mischievous Member of it. True indeed it is that Religion hath frequently been made a Cloak for Knavery to work under, and a Wolf will be always capable of doing most Mischief in Sheep's Cloathing; but if the Abuse of any thing were an Argument against the Use of it, that Argument would extend to every thing; every thing in this Life must be laid aside, and chiefly the best things, because they are generally applied to the worst Purposes. To decline therefore any Part of Religion for fear of being esteem'd Hypocrites, is actually to incur Damnation for fear of its being thought that we shall incur it; and however some Men may talk piously in order to act impiously to greater Advantage, yet certain it is, that were Men generally better Talkers, they would likewise generally be better Livers. It is not indeed always out of *the Abundance of the Heart* that *the Mouth speaketh*, yet the Abundance of the Heart will utter itself; and where there is no good Discourse,

course, there is certainly no Fund of Goodness within.

As to the Charge of *Stiffness* and *Formality*, it is very improperly applied to *Religious Discourse*, because they are Terms which signify an unnecessary Severity; and however severe Religion may seem in some of its Articles, it is certainly not unnecessary in any of them; on the contrary, it furnishes out the most necessary Topicks of Discourse, because on its Articles our Eternal Welfare depends; it furnishes out likewise the most refined and exalted Topicks, because it takes in the transcendant Glory and Purity of the Divine Attributes, the Wonders of the Creation, the much greater Wonders of our Redemption, the Beauty, the Wisdom, the Power of Providence, the lively Notices of Virtue and Holiness, the splendid Hopes of Bliss and Immortality: Religion enriches the Soul with the most bright Ideas of whatever is excellent, and engages our Performances in the most noble Scenes of Action. Were Men but induced to talk together of their Eternal Concerns with

the same Freedom and Affection as they do of their Temporal ; were they to apply the same Brightness of Fancy, the same Elegance of Expression, the same Delicacy of Wit, the same Force of Argument to Religious Truths, as they employ with respect to worldly Business and Amusements, our Conversation would then become heavenly, not only in Point of Holiness, but in Point of Pleasure and Satisfaction too : Men would be to one another as the Angels of God, and Piety would appear, as it really is, an amiable and ornamental Qualification. If any Sparks of Religion do remain in Mens Minds, an industrious Concealment would be a certain Means to stifle and extinguish them ; Conversation will serve to kindle them into an holy Flame, and when our Hearts are hot within us, the pious Breathings of Devotion will vent themselves, and communicate a godly Warmth to those we converse with : This would give wonderful Countenance to Religion in the World ; here the good Man would meet with vast Encouragement to pursue the Course of Virtue, when he is all along
favour'd

favoured with the Approbation of others, as well as rejoiced by the Applauses of his own Conscience : Here Shame would be turn'd upon the Ungodly, and he must in his own Defence be obliged to pay a due outward Regard to Religion, that he may become like the rest of Mankind : And thus were there a sufficient Number of good Men, *who out of the good Treasure of their Heart, would in this Way, bring forth good Things,* the pious Zeal they express for God's Glory would raise and animate the like Zeal in others ; *The Mouth of the Righteous would then become a Well of Life, and their Lips would feed many.*

BUT because some Indulgence is to be given even to the Iniquity of the Times, and Acts of Goodness must be sometimes with-holden, when we are sure they will take a wrong Turn ; it may be proper to subjoin a Direction or two with respect to *Religious Conversation*, which may tend to preserve, or rather recover the Use of it, and at the same time, if possible, take off from the Disgust of it ; and that is, in general we ought to avoid
the

the just Imputation of those Charges, which we before mentioned are generally cast upon *Religious Discourse*, viz. *Hypocrisy* and *Formality*.

N o w these two Charges thus far fall in with one another, that the greatest Hypocrites are generally the most formal, because when People are acting a Part, they are very apt to exceed Nature; and it may possibly be thought by the Actors of Hypocrisy, that their inward Foulness requires a great deal of outward Dawbing to conceal it. *Religious Discourse* therefore should be easy and unaffected, to shew that it is the natural Outgoings of the Soul, the true Bent and genuine Disposition of the Mind: It should be chearful, to shew that Peace and Joy are the Effects which Religion hath upon us, and by that Means to engage others to make Religion their Study and Business, that it may have the like Effects of Pleasure and Comfort upon them: It should be apposite, otherwise it will appear forced and constrain'd, and consequently disagreeable: Time, Place, Occasion, Company, &c. are all to be taken into Consideration,

sideration, otherwise *Religious Discourse*
 may frequently make a very undue Mix-
 ture, and *Pearls* be often *cast before Swine*.
 What is said of Religious Matters will
 likewise bid fair for having a good Effect,
 when it is short; many Occurrences may
 excite a pious Remark, but would very
 improperly engage a long Discourse: Con-
 versation is most entertaining, when Sub-
 jects as well as Persons have all their
 proper Share in it, when a few Words
 convey strong Ideas, and more is im-
 plied by them than express'd. Religion
 is at best thought an insipid sort of Dis-
 course, and it is a great Chance if it be
 not quite nauseated, when Tedioufness
 is added to the Prejudices Men already
 entertain against it; a lively Expression
 touches the Heart irresistibly, but a long
 Lecture is apt to tire the Ears too much
 to find any farther Passage: Above all,
 let our Actions speak the Praises of Re-
 ligion, and our good Discourse be back'd
 with good Living: To take God's Cove-
 nant in our Mouth, at the same time that
 our Hands deal with Wickedness, is the
 severest Reproach we can cast upon Re-
 ligion;

ligion ; it is crying to our Lord, *Hail King of the Jews !* and then *buffetting Him and spitting on Him*. It may indeed be turn'd as an Argument for Religion, that in this Case Men are even forced to confess it against themselves ; but the World will scarce be brought into that Way of conceiving, they pay a much greater Regard to Mens Actions than their Words, and form their Judgment of Things much more upon Example than Precept : It would therefore give great Weight and Influence to what we say, provided the Holiness of our Lives did come up to the Piety of our Talk ; tho' on the other hand it must be confess'd, that it would be too great a Check to good Discourse, if Men were obliged to say no more of Religion than they really practise.

It may seem strange to apologize for *Religious Discourse* in a Christian Country ; but it has plainly fallen into such an entire Disuse among us, that the Revival of it will require all prudential Management, and it must be Matter of Address to bring it into Life again with
any

any Advantage. This Head of Discourse has taken up too much Time to allow us to proceed to the other Heads at present ; but it will be proper to observe here, that tho' Men have forgot their Duty with respect to Religion, they have not so entirely forgot Religion itself, but they can talk of it with Irreverence, and treat it with Defiance and Mockery : Great Part of common Talk now is in the highest Degree corrupt ; the Obscenities and Prophanesses which have so large a Share not only in vulgar, but even in what is call'd polite Discourse, shew there is great Occasion to inculcate this Precept of the Apostle, since Mankind do so wonderfully mistake the proper Topicks, and instead of such Communication as Reason might improve by, and Holiness take Delight in, they fall into the basest Corruptions, as tho' they were labouring in Point of Conversation to transform themselves into either Brutes or Devils. It has been the constant Practice of all Ages to complain of the superior Viciousness of the present Times, because

because Men fix upon the most reigning Vice, and compare the present and the former Times with respect only to that Particular ; and certainly impure and irreligious Discourse is become extremely fashionable among us, far above the Practice of former Ages : There seems to be one Way of forming a Judgment of what common Discourse was in any Age, and that is from the Stage-Entertainments which were then in Vogue ; for they, being intended to represent Common Life, do generally speak the Language of the Times they were wrote and acted in ; and, what is a wonderful Reproach to us, the Plays which seem to give the greatest Satisfaction at present, turn entirely almost upon Filth and Impiety ; they thus far indeed come up to their Character, that they represent what Common Life now is ; but it would be more to our Credit and Advantage if they were to represent rather what it ought to be. Without doubt corrupt Communication insinuates wonderfully among us by their Means, and

Posterity

Posterity (if those Performances ever come to the Hands of Posterity) will find us represented in them under very odious Colours. If therefore the absolute Unlawfulness of such Entertainments be thought too severe a Doctrine, yet this we may affirm, that were not only Christianity, but even common Modesty and Virtue, to direct our Choice of those Entertainments, the Stage could not at all subsist upon its present Foot. As to obscene Discourse, it is utterly abhorrent to common Decency and Good-Manners ; it is poisonous indeed, but withal so very odious, that to well-disposed Persons it carries with it its own Antidote ; and he who does not nauseate it, must have a Mind extremely vicious and corrupt ; but the Luxury with which it is generally utter'd and receiv'd, shews that Mankind are at this Time fond of taking in the very Dregs of Pollution. *Prophane Discourse* is a Vice, that of all others has the least Foundation ; for it is surprizing, that amidst all those bright and exalted Characters,

under

under which we may and ought continually to view and adore the Divine Majesty, we will nevertheless be labouring to turn his Being and Attributes, his Word and his Works into Ridicule and Contempt, and that this should be esteem'd a great Degree of Wit and Good Sense. There is indeed a Sort of Wit which consists in joining together very disparate Ideas ; as when grand Affairs are put into a degrading Light, or trifling Affairs are mentioned under grand Circumstances. Now jesting in Sacred Matters is certainly joining together very disparate Ideas ; but if this is done without something of Reason to support it, it is not then Wit, but Absurdity. In common Life Matters of a more serious Nature will not bear to fall under Ridicule : To have a Buffoon determining upon Life and Death ; a Man behaving merrily in the extremest Dangers, &c. are Circumstances entirely out of Character, and plainly bespeak Folly and Madness : But how much more so is it in Divine Matters ? To see a Worm endeavouring
to

to outbrave Omnipotence ; to see a Man that is crush'd before the Moth, contemning the Majesty of Heaven, and ridiculing infinite Perfection, trifling about his Eternal Welfare, and jesting with Eternal Damnation, are monstrous Instances of absurd and daring Iniquity. But thus it is that Men suffer themselves to be deceived in what is fashionable (especially if what is fashionable be likewise wicked) that they will extravagantly approve and act over that in their most important Concerns, which common Reason would condemn in the very lowest Affairs of Life ; they will form the slightest and weakest Judgment there, where they ought to employ the utmost Caution and Exactness ; and rather than not gratify a wanton vicious Humour, they will give up the very Principles of common Sense. But however they may deceive themselves, God is not mocked ; the Almighty will at length pour down infinite Vengeance upon the Prophane for all their impious Jestings and foolish Laughter ; and however industriously they avoid the

Character of Hypocrites here, they will not be able hereafter, without a very severe Repentance, to ward off the partaking with Hypocrites in their Punishments, *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth.*



SERMON

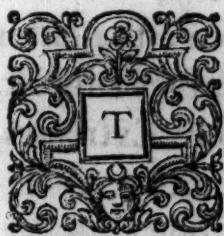


S E R M O N IX.



EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth ; but that which is good for the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.



THESE Words seem intended to regulate the common Conversation of Men with one another ; the Subject-Matter of which, for Distinction Sake, may be reduced to the Three Heads of such Discourse, as doth more immediately relate to God, our Neighbour, and Ourselves : The First of

these Heads, *viz.* *Religious Discourse*, hath been already largely treated of; the Second Head, which is such Conversation as doth more immediately concern *our Neighbour*, and which may properly go under the Name of *charitable Discourse*, comes next to be considered.

Now this Sort of Discourse may be branched out into two Particulars, as it may either relate to those we converse with, or to those whom we talk about. We shall come up to the Duty of Charity with respect to those we converse with, by treating them with an obliging Plainness; with Plainness, to shew the Sincerity; with an obliging Plainness, to shew the Goodness of our Nature. The former of these is opposed to Flattery, which is apt to feed the Vanity of Men; the latter to Rudeness, which always gives Disgust. If Men were to pursue these Extremes, they would meet together either to deceive or to quarrel with one another, and the Whole of Conversation would turn either upon Panegyrick or Satire, both which are Breaches of Charity; *for Chrity rejoiceth in the Truth*, but so, that

that if it be possible, and as much as in Her lieth, she will give no Offence by it.

FLATTERY is a Vice of great Meanness and Falshood in the Person by whom it is offered, and proceeds upon the Supposition of Pride and Folly in the Person on whom it is bestowed. The Flatterer's first Business is to make you extremely pleased with yourselves, in hopes doubtless to receive large Fruits from this good Humour of his own raising ; in order to this he new-models your Character to such a Degree, as to make you an entire Creature of his own, by attributing to you Excellencies, which you have not, and magnifying those you have : The Whole therefore of a Flatterer is a Lye, and a Lye is the lowest Degree of Baseness, because there is nothing so servile and disingenuous which he will not submit to : But he is dangerous as well as base ; he will lay himself at your Feet, but it is with an Intent to make you fall ; and he never fawns but with a Design to bite, or do you Mischief : So that Flattery is an Abuse of Speech, not only because it is made up of Falshood, but

likewise because it is made up of Uncharitable Falshood: The Satisfaction it gives a Man in himself, being founded upon imaginary Merit, must necessarily be attended with Pride, and must prevent the most useful Part of Knowledge, *viz.* the Knowledge of himself.

IT is seldom that Men choose to look into themselves, and then they do it slightly and under strong Prejudices; but Flattery heightens those Prejudices, it thereby varies the Prospect exceedingly, and hinders a true and thorough Inspection. Self-Love is too apt to paint us in fictitious Colours, and is fond, without doubt, of any Advantage it can receive from Abroad: Flattery therefore gains an easy Access to the Heart, by striking in with so prevailing a Passion, and by taking part so entirely with our Fancy, finds but little Difficulty in overcoming our Reason. Compliment a poor Man upon his great Wealth, a Man in low Station upon his great Honours, and they'll know their outward Circumstances too well, not to think themselves ill-treated; but tell a Man, that is never so indifferent

indifferent in either respect, of his excellent Qualities, or high Accomplishments, if he does not truly believe much of them himself, he will at least hope that you do, and think himself obliged to you for your favourable Conceptions; but it is a great Chance, if he does not pay so much Deference to your Judgment, as to fall a little in with your professed Opinion of him, and rise within himself upon the Merit you falsely attribute to him: By this Means he suffers a double Prejudice, the World will soon pluck his borrowed Plumes, and he will thereby be exposed to Contempt; he will likewise most probably be somewhat elated, and by endeavouring to move in too high a Sphere, will fall into the Sin of Pride, and into the Misery both of Contempt and Disappointment. Thus Men may do more Mischief by their soft than by their harsh Speeches, and the *Words which are smoother than Oil*, may yet be very *Swords*.

THE other Circumstance of *Charitable Discourse*, with respect to those we converse with, is that of an obliging Plain-

ness. To avoid one Extreme to such a Degree as to run into the quite contrary, is no uncommon Failure in Life ; and many to shew their Abhorrence of Flattery, will give up common Civility ; and this is certainly a great Breach of Charity, because without a civil Deportment, Seeds of Ill-nature are perpetually sowing, and must necessarily spring up into a plentiful Harvest of Anger, Malice, Hatred, Enmity, &c. In Conversation Truth is principally and more immediately to be regarded, but Truth requires a decent Dress ; when it shews itself in Derision or Calumny, it makes too rough and slovenly an Appearance to be at all beneficial, and it is much better perhaps to be silent even in useful Truths, than to utter them with Provocation. The Notion of treating Men as they deserve, and giving them what we call their own, is frequently thought to carry something of a shew of Justice with it ; but it hath nothing either of Prudence or Goodness ; and it is a much greater Argument of our Malice, than of our regard for Truth, to be designedly so open as to become offensive,

offensive, and so plain, as to create Odium to ourselves and Uneasiness to others.

WHAT frequently engages Men in this Extreme, is the Affectation of Wit. The Notion of deriding other Men for their Follies, and railing at them for their Vices, prevails wonderfully, because Satire is thought to give a Superiority to those who employ it, and sets a Man up both for a Wit and a Reformer : But he who sacrifices his Christian Temper to his Wit, shews more of Ill-nature than Good-sense, and the Truth and Keeness of his Satire will be no Excuse for the Uncharitableness and Mischief of it. Reproof does not so properly fall under common Conversation, as under private Friendship : Some sudden Cases may be so aggravated as to require sharp and immediate Correction, and there let Prudence and Charity determine how to apply it. In general those Follies and Vices which require most Plainness, require the greatest Address : Reproof is too tender to be trusted in rough and unskilful Hands, and Satire, unless it be modestly managed, calls for that Discipline
it

it intends to inflict : Courtesy is a Gospel-Duty as well as Plainness, and in a polish'd Sincerity it is that in this respect we see the Perfection of Grace and Truth.

WHAT hath been here said relates rather to the *Manner* than *Matter* of *Conversation*, for the Persons we converse with are not the proper Subjects of Talk ; and no more should be said of them to themselves than what is barely necessary, because it is difficult to speak of any Person without either commending or discommending, and consequently without approaching one of those Extremes we before mentioned. It is no other than a Christian Part to make Good-will and Chearfulness circulate briskly in Life ; but this must seemingly be done rather of Course than with Design, and the good as well as the bad Conceptions we entertain of any Person should, if necessary, be implied more frequently than expressed. If we find Occasion to disapprove, it should be with Modesty and Address ; if we approve, we should express ourselves in a natural and sparing Manner ; for Men may surfeit even with
deserved

deserved Commendation, and over-charge with just Applauses. In short, Charity is to be regarded here, and an open undesigning Courtesy, which pays a manly Deference to Superiors, an engaging Condescension to Inferiors, which prefers Equals in Honour, and provokes them in Love, is the best Method of performing it. But,

2dly, PROCEED we now to consider the other Branch of *Charitable Discourse*, viz. that which relates to those we converse about ; and this is opposed to Defamation ; a View extremely odious, but if possible even less odious than common : Fall into any Company whatever, and it is a great Chance, if Conversation does not run entirely this way, and every fresh Person that is mentioned opens a fresh Spring to Calumny. This is a Vice, which appears in every Shape, and receives as many Modifications, as there are Diversities of Tempers. The Men of Spirit are open-mouth'd upon People's Characters ; the Reserv'd deal out their Scandal in Hints and Whispers ; the Formal lift up their Eyes to Heaven, and

thank

thank God that they are not as other Men are. These and many such-like are the different Ways of expressing Defamation ; so that there is no conversing upon the common Foot, without a large Fund of Censure and Invektive ; and he bids fairest for being thought the best Company, who knows the least of his Neighbours Virtues, and the most of their Failures.

Now to feed thus upon Filth and Carrion shews a Palate wonderfully vitiated and sordid ; to spend that Time in spying and promulging the Faults of others, which ought to be employ'd in correcting our own, looks as if it were the same thing to us, whether other People be wicked, or ourselves righteous, and as if our Justification in the Sight of God would turn indifferently upon their Vices, or our own Virtues.

THE general Root of this Vice is a Composition of Pride and Envy, and it shoots out into the most destructive Branches of poisoning People's Reputations ; it is sinful therefore both in its Rise and Consequences : The Devil himself is the grand Defamer, and he hath
many

many Disciples, who, like him, *go to and fro in the Earth, and walk up and down in it, like roaring Lions and venomous Serpents, seeking whom they can devour.*

MANY are so absurdly proud as to lay Claim to a good Character without endeavouring to deserve it ; this puts them upon envying those who deservedly possess what they so fondly desire, and Envy always exercising itself on Account of some supposed Advantage of another, naturally obstructs every thing which may at all tend to that Advantage. Here therefore Defamation is interposed as a Cloud to obscure the Brightness of a fair Reputation ; and however some Blemishes are made the immediate and plausible Objects of Detraction, yet Excellencies are the real Causes of it and Men frequently suffer in Character not so much because they deserve an ill Name, as because they deserve a good one. Accordingly, it is commonly said, that Slander is a Tax upon Merit (where we may barely observe, that there is at present either a great deal of Merit in the World, or that the Tax upon it runs
extremely

extremely high) ; and if this be the Case of Slander, then it ought to prejudice us in Favour of those who suffer it, at least it ought not to affect us much either Way ; it is so widely scattered, it is taken up upon such slight Grounds, and ventured so much at random, that it hits indifferently the Good and the Bad, and is one of those Things *which come alike to all*. There is no one who converseth in Life who cannot immediately recollect from what Suspicions positive Calumny is frequently raised ; what Falsties are purposely propagated, what Virtues designedly misrepresented, what Merit wilfully traduced ; and what shews how great a share Envy hath in this Vice, few Instances can be quoted where Persons who have done publick Good have not done it in some measure at the Expence of their Good Name : Accordingly, all Men are ready in general to declare, that common Report is a Lyar, but it is a Lyar which of all others is most easily believed ; that Principle of Pride and Envy, which gives Rise to Defamation, is universal, so that this Vice thrives upon

upon the same Stock, and is kept up and improves by the same Principle, from which it was first produced.

THUS we see that the Origin of Defamation is base and sinful, and the Effects of it bear a proper Proportion to its Origin ; its Business is to rob People of what they esteem most valuable in Life, their good Name ; to turn the World upside down with respect to Characters, and to confound good and bad Actions so as to subject them all indifferently to Calumny and Slander. The Breath of a Defamer is of an infectious Nature, and tends to blast every thing it reaches. Reputation is a Thing nicely constituted, fine and tender in its Texture, which makes it more liable to Accidents, and more easy to be destroyed. Let therefore a Man's Stock of Merit be never so large and generous, let it branch out into Actions never so virtuous and laudable, let it promise, let it have actually raised upon it Fruits of Praise and Reputation never so fair and lovely, yet those Fruits are within the Reach and Mischief of Defamation, and the Character

racter of the purest Innocence and most
 superior Merit, if not quite destroyed,
 will nevertheless be sullied and deform'd
 by it. Or to make use of a Scripture
 Similitude ; *A good Name*, says the Wise
 Man, *is better than precious Ointment* ;
 it has therefore a most grateful Odour,
 it requires great Pains and tedious Ap-
 plication to attain it ; it is to be preserved
 with great Caution and Diligence ; yet
 this so pleasant, so costly, so valuable a
 Treasure is wantonly to be destroy'd,
 and lavishly to be squander'd away by
 every Tongue that loves to utter false
 Words : In this respect too a good Name
 is like unto precious Ointment, if it be
 once pour'd out, it is not to be recovered
 again, at least not to its first Degree of
 Purity ; you may as well labour to drive
 a River back again into its Fountain-
 Head, as to trace Scandal through all
 the Channels it hath pass'd up to its first
 Author, and to leave those Channels as
 pure as tho' it had not pass'd them ; for
 Men receive Defamation with Greedi-
 ness, part from it with Reluctance, spread
 it abroad with Pleasure, retract it only
 upon

upon the greatest Force ; and all this while our Neighbour suffers in a most tender Point : His Reputation is the present Reward of his Labours, and a pleasing Encouragement to him in his farther Pursuit after Virtue ; it enables him to do Good with greater Advantage, and to suffer Hardships with greater Chearfulness ; it sets him up for a burning and a shining Light to the World, and renders him a much more capable Instrument of promoting God's Glory and Man's Happiness. To rob him therefore of his Reputation is doing him substantial Mischief ; robbing him of his Money, which may be restored to him a thousand Ways, bears no Proportion to it. That which so greatly aggravates the Sin of Murder, is, that it is destroying the Divine Image ; and St. *James* gives that Argument a forcible Turn, with respect to our Speech ; *The Tongue*, says the Apostle, *is an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison ; therewith we bless God, even the Father, and therewith curse we Men, which are made after the Similitude of God.* And how far Characters of Innocence and Virtue are more

eminent Circumstances of the Divine Image, how far consequently effacing those Characters hath in it the Nature and partakes of the Guilt of Murder, is worth the Defamer's while seriously to consider. It hath been a Law in some Countries, and it seems a Law highly reasonable, to punish those who in a judicial Way bear false Witness, in the same Manner as they would have punish'd the Persons accused, had they been really guilty : And should the Almighty think fit to take Things in that View at the last Day, what complicated Guilt will they be oppressed with ? What Variety of Vengeance must fall upon their Heads, who have in Conversation born false Witness against their Neighbour in every Kind and Degree of Wickedness ?

Now it is certainly Defamation in the worst Degree to bespatter Innocence, and to invent and spread abroad scandalous Falshoods ; but to publish even Truths that are injurious, to discover the secret Faults of our Neighbours, to censure publicly what ought to be corrected privately, are likewise Degrees of Defamation

mation, and great Breaches of Charity, because it is the Property of Charity in this respect likewise *to cover the Multitude of Sins*. These Circumstances arise from Pride and Envy, and are attended with the same ill Consequences of ruining Reputations, which may in the main be really good. *Joseph*, the Husband of the *Blessed Virgin*, is call'd a *just Man* for his tender Intentions of putting away his espoused Wife privately, and not making her a publick Example, when he discover'd her to be with Child ; he not knowing at that Time that what was conceived in her was from Above. And indeed to publish the secret Offences of others is sinful upon many Accounts, because the exposing the Actors of them to open Shame, tends wonderfully to harden them in Sin ; it does not reclaim them from it, it plunges them deeper in Guilt. Again, by making the Vices of other Men the Subjects of common Talk, we make the Notions of Wickedness less affecting, by rendering them more familiar. As all Men fall under Censure for their Failures, Persons who have

VOL. I. O 2 been

been hitherto innocent, will be apt to think themselves singular in retaining their Virtue, a Singularity very few are fond of, and will imagine it will be very pardonable for them to run into those Vices which Conversation informs them are universal. Farther yet, this Practice is a Means of nourishing Uncharitableness, inasmuch as thereby we view our Neighbour always in the worst Light, and paint him in such Colours as make him odious to others : Here therefore Peace is broken in upon, Good-will is choak'd up, and a Stop is put to that general Harmony and Kindness, whereby so much present Happiness flows in upon us. Yet under all those aggravating Circumstances, Defamation in every Kind and Degree of Baseness makes the largest Share in Conversation, and is acted over hourly, deliberately, barefacedly, and even by those who would think themselves ill-treated not to be esteem'd good Christians. From the serious and solemn Manner wherewith they pronounce their Calumnies, one would be apt to imagine, that it is really their Business and Duty to sit in Judgment

Judgment upon Peoples Reputations, and to deal out Scandal in what Proportions they think proper ; but from the Mischiefs which attend their Decisions, from the Fulness and Uncharitableness of their Proceedings, one cannot but likewise believe, that their Tribunals, if they have any Authority, must derive their Authority from the King of Darkness, and that *Satan* always suggests what Sentences they are to pass.

THIS Censoriousness in seemingly good People, goes under the Notion of discountenancing Vice ; but it would answer the Purpose of Holiness at least as well, and would be a much better Exercise of our Charity, to dwell a little now and then upon our Neighbours good Qualities, and by that means to endeavour the Encouragement of Virtue.

IN some Cases indeed, where publick Justice requires it, or private Admonition makes it advisable, where the Baseness of a designing Person makes common Caution necessary, or the Notoriety of Facts makes open Abhorrence our Duty, there we are allow'd to speak our Minds

with Freedom : But these Circumstances fall not so frequently and properly under common Conversation, and in the general our Talent at Censure had much better be turned upon ourselves ; and were we to look inward with any Part of that Accuracy which we employ with respect to others, we should find too much in ourselves to be corrected, to allow us Leisure to attend to foreign Reformati-
 ons. Let him who is without Fault cast the first Censure at his Neighbour, and that ought entirely to stop the Mouth of Calumny. If this Sort of Reformation be a Charity, let it, like other Charities, begin with ourselves ; and when *we have plucked the Beam out of our own Eye, then shall we see more clearly to pluck out the Mote from our Brother's Eye.* But is Judgment our Business ? God hath reserv'd that to himself, and hath commanded us not to judge by Appearance, to judge nothing before the Time. Defamation therefore is no Part of a Christian's Character, Censure is even invading the Divine Prerogative ; for as St. James argues excellently, *Chap. iv. Ver. 11, 12.*

Speak

Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren. He that speaketh Evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh Evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law ; but if thou judgest the Law, thou art not a Doer of the Law, but a Judge. There is one Law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy : Who art thou, that judgest another ? But thus it is that Men rather than not be Uncharitable, will be prophane ; rather than not injure their Neighbour, will bid Defiance to the Almighty.

UPON the Whole then with respect to this Sort of Conversation, we ought to think and speak of Mankind with Candor ; to be slow to hear ill Reports, to be slower yet to believe them, and never to be Authors and Promoters of them ; to rejoice in the Excellencies we see our Neighbours possess'd of, and chearfully to bear a modest Testimòny to their Merit ; a modest Testimony, for Commendation may exceed in Point of Prudence, when it does not exceed in Point of Justice ; and large Praises frequently raise the Envy of those who hear them, and are answer'd with Detraction :

It is our Duty to clear up the Reputation of those who are unjustly traduced, and to smooth over those Characters, which Truth might censure, tho' Charity ought not ; to throw a Veil of Tenderness over those Faults which are not notorious, and to endeavour a Remedy of Mens Imperfections, without exposing them to open Air : In short, we ought to conceive and speak of others in the same Manner as we shall wish to have done at that Day, when what we thought of in Private shall be made as clear as the Light, and what *we uttered in the Closets,* shall be as though it were spoken on the House Tops. But how will the Slanderer and Backbiter appear at that Day, when the *Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed,* when traduced Innocence shall shine forth in the Brightness of Glory, and the Guilt of the Defamer be shewn in the Blackness of Pride and Malice ; when every Aggravation whereby they have heighten'd their Neighbour's Faults, every Instance of Detraction whereby they have lessen'd their Neighbours Excellencies, every Act of contemptuous Derision, of uncharitable

table tho' true Censure, every Omission of vindicating injured Characters, every industrious With-holding of due Commendation, will add to the Foulness of their own Demerits ; when they shall be judged, even as they have judged ; when they shall be condemned, even as they have condemn'd, without Mercy.



S E R M O N

[1881]

Table of the number of persons
of various religions, and
of various nations, in the
United States, in the year
1880. The population of
the United States, in the
year 1880, was 50,155,000.
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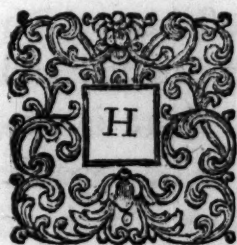


S E R M O N X.



E P H E S. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good for the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.



HAVING already considered common Conversation, as it relates more immediately to God and our Neighbour, under the Two Heads of Religious and Charitable Discourse, proceed we now, according to our proposed Division, in the Third Place, to consider such Matter of Conversation as doth

doth more immediately concern *Ourselves*. In the former Respects, Duty is more apparently concern'd, because Prophaneness and Obscenity, which are oppos'd to *Religious*; Flattery, Rudeness and Defamation, whether true or false, which are oppos'd to *Charitable Discourse*, are all of them Circumstances confessedly and directly sinful; but this last Branch of Conversation, which includes all other Subjects of Discourse whatever, may seem at first View, to be of too indifferent a Nature to fall under Precept, especially in this Place, where it is generally expected that Articles of strict Divinity should be treated of rather than the Affairs of common Life, where Instructions of Piety ought rather to be inculcated, than those Directions which it is the proper Business of Reason and Prudence to suggest. But there is nothing so indifferent, as not to be capable both of a good and bad Turn; nothing so minute in the most remote Instances of Duty, which the Gospel may not improve into a Virtue, and consequently which may not fall under useful Consideration

ration in a Christian Way, tho' such Points as these need not be so frequently and largely insisted on, as those of greater Importance.

OUR Blessed Saviour compares *the Kingdom of Heaven*, i. e. the Kingdom of God's Grace or the Gospel, *unto Leaven, which a Woman took and hid in three Measures of Meal 'till the Whole was leavened*; which Similitude well expresses how wonderfully the Gospel insinuates itself into every Part of our Life; what an useful Ferment it makes with respect to our whole Behaviour; what a grateful Tincture it gives to every one of our Actions. No Circumstance therefore of Life is below a Christian Regard, since there is no Circumstance of it, which may not fall under Christian Improvement.

BUT this Topick is of itself far from being of a trifling Nature; our Blessed Saviour assures us, that we shall *give an Account of every idle Word*: Where the Term *idle* does not only signify *blasphemous*, but that likewise which has no good Tendency, that which doth not answer any of the Ends of Discourse, either
 God's

God's Glory, or the Good of ourselves or others.

AGAIN, Conversation takes up a great deal of our Time, and a due Management of our Time is a most important Concern ; it is not sufficient not to employ it to ill Purposes, we are to employ it to all the Advantages we are able ; it is therefore a Misapplication of a most precious Talent to spend much of our Time, if not in such Conversation as is not directly sinful, yet in such as is productive of no Good : The Notion of Duty requires something positive, and we must not content ourselves with barely *ceasing to speak Evil, we must learn to speak well* ; not that we need to be continually dwelling on pious Subjects : The Affairs of this Life challenge some Regard, and may be managed in Conversation to great Advantage ; our Faculties call for Improvement in a natural as well as a moral Way, and such an Improvement will be found on many Accounts to be of true and absolute Service. Farther yet, the Tongue is a Member of great Consequence, for Life and Death are in the Power of the Tongue :

Tongue: It is likewise very unruly; give it but an innocent Loose, and you will soon find it too headstrong to be again easily restrain'd; it is a Member of all other the most forward and unwearied in Exercise, and requires great Care and Diligence to exercise it aright: In much Talk there is much Danger, and he that multiplieth Words, multiplieth Mischiefs. As therefore Society makes Speech necessary, and as our Corruptions make it dangerous; as Discourse streams forth into numberless Channels, and as it is apt while it flows continually to degenerate, it will become us to guard against its ill Tendency in every the most minute Circumstance, to observe every Channel through which it passes, and to endeavour to keep it up to its proper Strength and Purity. And that we may the better be able to do this, let us proceed,

I. To consider what are proper Topics for Discourse under this Branch of our Division, and

II. WE

II. WE may remark a little upon those, which however improperly, are nevertheless generally made the Topicks of common Conversation.

1st, THEN, let us consider what are proper Topicks for Discourse under this Branch of our Division.

NOW the End of Conversation being both to improve and gratify, we may consider what Topicks those are which with respect to this Life fall under these Two Heads. The proper Topicks for *Improvement*, are such as tend to enlarge our Minds, to exercise our Reason, to inform our Understanding, to encrease our Knowledge, &c. in a natural Way. Topicks for *Gratification*, are such as tend to polish and civilize Society, as render Mankind pleas'd with one another, and give Life a chearful Mixture of Innocence and Complacency. The first of these Sorts are Arts and Sciences, Observations drawn from History or Experience, &c. Now it is our Duty to converse upon such Subjects, because it is
our

our Duty to improve in every Instance of Excellency which it hath pleas'd the Almighty to place within the Reach of our Abilities ; the more we know, the more we are enabled to glorify our Great Creator, and to benefit Mankind ; and Conversation is an obvious Means of improving in all Sorts of Knowledge ; it lets us into Mens Thoughts of Things, and we are thereby either confirm'd or rectified in our own Judgments ; we likewise make our own Notions more intimately our own, by expressing them to others : Our inward Conceptions are, as it were, the Embrios of Knowledge, which would frequently prove abortive, did not Conversation give them their true Life ; we always feel more strong Impressions of that which we labour to inculcate, and become best informed ourselves by endeavouring to inform others.

THESE Topicks of Discourse relate not only to the Learned, but to every Person whatever : There is no one so ignorant, as not to know something at least of some Art or Science ; no one so dull, as not to be able to make some

Observations for regulating the Conduct of Human Life : Men of low Capacities and Attainments cannot indeed converse so well as Men of more deep and extensive Knowledge, but they can converse according to their Knowledge, and wherever there is any Knowledge, there is room for Improvement.

AGAIN, Such Discourse as this is a great Spur to Industry ; Difficulties in Conversation are made extremely slight, and Men are fond of endeavouring to act over that in reality, which is so easily transacted in common Talk : Business passeth off much better when Men are appriz'd of the Necessity and Practicableness of it from others, and we are more able to struggle in Life to Advantage by understanding the various Turns of Affairs, the different Tempers of Men, and the due Management of those Tempers : All this while the Mind is cultivating and fitting itself for brighter Scenes of Action, raising itself out of the cloudy Regions of Brutality and Ignorance, into a State of a more refined Humanity, and in all respects

respects becoming more capable of doing publick Service.

THE other Branch of proper Topicks for Discourse, with respect to the Things of this Life, are those of *Gratification*; the Mind of Man is too weak to be always upon the Stretch; serious Points are apt to fatigue, when long attended to; it requires something lively and refreshing in Conversation to keep up our Spirits to their proper Pitch, and to allow them their full Scope of Acting; here then agreeable Excursions of Wit, brisk Turns of Fancy, &c. are very allowable, to give a Relaxation to the Mind, and to dispose it for the Prosecution of what is more serious: This indeed falls in with the inferior Faculties of the Soul; but the inferior Faculties ought to have their proper Exercise, and the Imagination may indulge itself in humorous Subjects, as long as it is confin'd within the Bounds of Innocence and Discretion: Topicks of this Sort are infinite; the common Occurrences of Life will never fail to furnish them out to us in large Quantities; and it is rather our Business to manage

them aright, than to discover what they are. It may be proper barely to mention, that we ought to choose those Topics which are most manly, because tho' we are to be diverted by such Conversation, we are to be diverted like rational Creatures, and the Satisfaction we meet with in this Way at least to be what common Sense may approve: Again, such Discourse should not engross too much of our Time, because it is absurd to turn what should only amuse into an Employment, and to make that a real Business which is intended only to relieve from the Fatigues of Business. Upon the Whole then, that Conversation which more immediately relates to ourselves, and turns chiefly upon the Affairs of this Life, will, when rightly manag'd, serve many good Purposes; it is improving, it is agreeable, it enlarges and refines the Soul, it promotes mutual Kindness and Society, it is a constant Spring of Cheerfulness and Good-nature, it fills up Time at least innocently, and prevents those Abuses of Speech with respect to this

Branch

Branch of our Division, which it is our own Business now in the

2^d Place to remark a little upon.

CONVERSATION, with respect to the Affairs of this Life, generally turns upon vain and impertinent Topicks; Fashions, Dress, Diversions, Entertainments, &c. are Subjects which are most seriously argued upon and solemnly discuss'd; so that if we were to judge of Life from common Discourse, the whole Business of it is errand Foppery. Now this betrays great Levity of Mind, and tends wonderfully to weaken and enervate our superior Faculties: He who labours to be learned upon such Articles as those, finds out but a mean Employment for his Reason, and may converse for Ages without advancing one Step forwards in Wisdom: Such Discourse answers no Purpose at all; he must have but little Understanding who thinks it improving, and he but a bad Taste, who thinks it agreeable: It is not indeed in the worst Sense *corrupt Communication*, but it is *so far corrupt*, that it is *unedifying*; it neither is of Service to the Speakers, neither doth it *minister Grace*

unto the Hearers ; it is at least at unprofitable Method of squandering away Time ; it is a Debasement of our Minds, and a Neglect of improving ourselves in those Instances of Knowledge, which it hath pleas'd the Almighty to give us Capacity for attaining, and which we might be able to turn to Publick Service. This may possibly seem a needless and unreasonable Piece of Severity, to abridge Conversation to such a Degree, as to cut off from it so many Topicks, which are generally thought at least innocent and inoffensive, especially since they lie level to the top Capacities of many Persons in Life ; so that if those Persons be debarr'd discoursing in this Way, they must be entirely seclused from bearing any Share in all Conversation whatever. But let it be considered, that the Debasement of our Faculties is a Perversion of them ; that the Non-improvement of our Talents is an Abuse of them, and that vain Discourse is sinful, as well as that which is profane and uncharitable. We ought therefore to be extremely careful what Turn our Conversation takes, because
trifling

trifling Discourse is apt to grow wonderfully upon us, and betrays us insensibly into such Levities as common Reason would industriously decline, as true Sobriety would be asham'd of, and, since we are to *give an Account of every idle Word*, such as Christianity would be afraid of incurring. Here it is obvious to reflect how severe a Judgment those Persons must pass, who employ both their Time and Study in this Way, so far as even to bring this Sort of Conversation into Rule and Method, those, whose whole Life is spent in impertinent Visits, and whose Visits are made up of idle Discourse.

BUT there is one Topick of this Sort of Conversation which deserves to be more particularly taken notice of, because it is very common and very mischievous, and that is talking about other Peoples Business. Now this Habit arises from a trifling Curiosity, which tends to no End, and can serve no Purpose; yet if you name any indifferent Person, it is a great chance if you do not hear his whole History, his Pedegree, his Alli-

ances, his Oeconomy, his Behaviour, his Miscarriages, his lucky Accidents, his Views in Life, &c. all are enlarg'd upon; what he does in his Clofet, let it be never so innocent, will be as tho' it was done upon the House-Top; his Motions are observ'd, his Actions examined, his Designs enquired into, and the Man scrutiniz'd in every Particular.

THIS is not indeed so properly Defamation, because nothing scandalous perhaps is spoken, but it is very prejudicial upon many Accounts; it is a large Step towards Defamation; and it can scarce be imagined, that where there is so exact a Survey taken of any Person, and so much Talk about him, that there will not start up a great deal of Scandal; besides, this gives Occasion to designing Men to make an ill Use of many Circumstances, which may be in themselves innocent and commendable, and which, tho' very proper to be done, are not proper to be commonly known: Again, this represents Mens Affairs in a very undue and partial Light, because the putting together a few disjointed outward Appearances

ances will make a Man's Behaviour seem very inconsistent, as tho' we were to form our Judgment of a large Machine from a few Wheels which have immediate relation with one another. In order to talk of Mens Affairs truly, we ought to know their Springs and Motives of Action ; and in all indifferent Matters it is much better to leave them to judge for themselves, because they understand the Whole of the Case, and best know their own Circumstances, and those who judge by Appearance seldom judge righteous Judgment ; this therefore exposes those they talk of to the World, by placing the Truth that relates to them in an imperfect View, and mixing a great deal that is false with it ; for Men of this Cast of Mind frequently improve Suspicions into Certainties, and have always a Fancy strong enough for large Invention.

ST. PETER calls such Men *busy Bodies in other Mens Matters* ; the original Word for which may be more literally translated *Overseers of other Mens Matters*. Now it argues great Pride and Forwardness in those who take upon them
this

this general Inspection ; it carries with it the Air of Guardianship over Mankind, as tho' no Action ought to escape their Notice, and all Business whatever should fall under their Cognizance. *Who made me a Judge or a Divider over you ?* says our Blessed Saviour to the Person who desir'd him to interpose about dividing an Inheritance ; but had any one else been applied to, the Case would probably have been immediately taken in hand. In short, there is a strange Fondness in Mankind to meddle with the Affairs of others, and that to a great Degree of neglecting their own ; and this is a Principle of Pride and Wantonness in its Origin, and of Mischief in its Effects ; it is entirely contrary to Modesty, Good Nature and Good Sense ; it bears no Christian Marks at all about it, it being a Gospel as well as a Prudential Precept, That every *Man* should *study to be quiet, and to do his own Business* ; and we find those Persons sharply reprimanded by St. Paul, who *learn to be idle, wandering from House to House, and not only idle, says the Apostle, but Tattlers and Busy Bodies,*

Bodies, who speak things which they ought not.

THUS then have we considered the *Matter of Conversation*, with respect to *God*, our *Neighbour* and *Ourselves*, and shew'd how subservient we might make our Speech to *God's Glory* and to the *Benefit of ourselves and others*; but it is notorious how corrupt our Communication is in every Instance of it, inso-much that the true Use of Speech is entirely perverted, and what was intended by the Almighty for the Advantage of Society, is really turn'd into the Bane and Pest of it. Now that which requires to be so largely and thoroughly reform'd necessarily engages a more minute Consideration; but whatever is or can be said of this Sort is so well known from continual Experience, that the Familiarity of it takes off from the Impressions which might otherwise be made concerning it, and we shall not be so well able to judge of the Guilt and Mischiefs of common Conversation as by removing it to some Distance, and seeing it without Partiality.

LET

LET any one therefore, after he hath spent many Hours in that which is call'd good and engaging Company, seriously examine with himself what useful Improvement either in a moral or a natural Way he can make of the Conversation that has pass'd, and it is a great chance, if he be made a whit the wiser or better for it ; it may be well perhaps if he carries away as much Innocence and Sobriety, or rather as little Guilt and Levity, as he brought with him.

OR rather let us suppose an Hermit, one who hath long sequester'd himself from Human Society, and in a manner forgot the Use of Speech, but one who hath improv'd his Mind, as far as Solitude would allow, in meditating on the Divine Nature and his own Being, who hath employed his rational Faculties wholly in the Search after more exalted Truths, and hath enlarged his Soul by the bright Notices of Virtue and Holiness and the glorious Hopes of Bliss and Immortality : Suppose we then that such an one was inform'd how much he had neglected a most useful Talent ; that the

the Almighty made Man a sociable Creature, and that Discourse is a Fund of vast Improvement, that Speech opens the Hearts of Men, and lets us into many worthy Notions without Pains or Difficulty, that *as Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the Conversation of Men one another*; that we may become wise upon their Stock of Knowledge, by transcribing into our own Minds their well-digested Sentiments, that Learning flows from this Fountain in large Streams, and that we may drink deeply of the Waters of Instruction with Ease and Pleasure: Upon such Intimations as these how would the Hermit lament his tedious Labours after a solitary Knowledge, and the Neglect of so large and obvious a Method of Improvement? With what Eagerness would he break out from his Retirement? With what Expectation would he run into Society? But when upon trying all Companies, and hearing the Discourse which prevails among all Ranks and Orders of Men, he finds Conversation the Source of Iniquity, and the Tongue the grand Instrument of Mischief; when in-

stead of praising and adoring our great Creator, he hears Oaths, Blasphemies and Prophaneness ; instead of pure and holy Discourse, he hears Filthiness and Obscenity ; instead of sincere and charitable Expressions with respect to our Neighbour, he hears Flattery, Rudeness and Defamation ; and even what is esteemed most innocent and inoffensive in Conversation, when instead of such Discourse as we might improve by in a natural Way, such as our Reason might enjoy with Satisfaction, and our Fancy might suggest for a masculine Entertainment, he hears nothing but Folly, Vanity and Impertinence, how wretchedly will he be disappointed in his Pursuits ? How impatiently will he long for his former Retirement ? Would he not be provoked to take up his Parable and say, *The Heart Man is a polluted Spring, and Rivers of corrupt Communication issue from it. How are the Children of Men Lovers of Vanity, and their Delight is in Lies ! Their inward Parts are very Wickedness, the Poison of Asps is under their Lips ; their Tongue is swift to shed Blood ; they speak*

all things that they may do hurt ; was the use of Speech really given us for a Blessing ? Wherefore then doth it disquiet the whole World, driving Men from Nation to Nation, pulling down strong Cities, and overthrowing the Houses of Great Men ? The Tongue casteth out virtuous Women, and depriveth them of their Labours. Who so hearken'd unto it shall never find Rest, and shall never dwell quietly. The Stroke of the Whip maketh Marks in the Flesh, but the Stroke of the Tongue breaketh the Bones. Many have fallen by the Edge of the Sword, but not so many as have fallen by the Tongue. Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not pass'd through the Venom thereof. But who is there that can escape it ? It is a Pestilence that walketh in Darknes ; its Arrows destroy at the Noon-day ; thousands fall beside it, ten thousands at its Right-hand. Oh ! that I had Wings like a Dove, would he say, that I might flee away from this untoward Generation, and be at rest ! Surely there is greater Pleasure in Solitude, at least there is Innocence. How is the World become a Desolation, and
the

the Wilderness a Place of Refuge ! Woe is me, that I have conversed with Mankind, and made my Habitation among the Sons of Men ! The Roarings of Lions are not so dangerous as their Tongues ; the Dwellings of wild Beasts abound with Safety and Civility in comparison of what Human Society produce.

UPON the Whole then can it be imagined that the Use of Speech was indulged to us for the uttering God's Praises, for the mutual Edification of ourselves and others ? Can it be imagined, that we are placed here on Earth in order to qualify ourselves for the Conversation of Saints and Angels, and that our Tongues are intended eternally to dwell upon Divine Hallelujahs ? This indeed is the gracious Design of the Almighty ; and shall not the Prospect of that blissful Employment engage us to set a Watch over the Door of our Lips, and to render our Discourse such as becomes the Gospel of Christ, such at least as is commonly virtuous and innocent ? If our Souls are to be greatly purified and exalted in order to our being made meet Partakers of heavenly

venly Joys ; and if Conversation be a proper and necessary Means for working out for us such Improvements, then does it behove us in every Instance of Conversation to remember the Dignity of our Being, and to act up to the Worthiness of our Vocation, that no corrupt Communication of any Sort may ever proceed out of our Mouth.

BUT more especially when we are called upon to be Guests at God's Table, let us consider, that in vain shall we endeavour to purify our Thoughts, unless we likewise purify our Discourse ; because *he who seemeth to be Religious and bridleth not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain*, saith the Apostle ; and we cannot be guilty of a greater Profanation of our Lord's Supper, than by receiving those Holy Mysteries into a Mouth, through which Streams of Corruption are continually flowing. Let therefore the Purifying Coals of God's Altar, while they enflame our Minds with Pious Dispositions, enrich our Mouths likewise with the devoutest Thanksgivings ; that

when our Hearts are ready, we may praise the Lord with the best Member that we have ; that that Meekness and Charity which the Gospel inspires, that Innocence and Simplicity which adorn a Christian Conversation, may run through all our Discourse ; and that while we minister Grace unto the Hearers, we may treasure up our own Justification against that Day, wherein *by our Words we shall be justified, and by our Words we shall be condemned.*



SERMON



S E R M O N XI.



ROMANS VI. 21.

*What Fruit had ye then in those things
whereof ye are now ashamed? for the
End of those things is Death.*



HERE Interest and Happiness are apparently concern'd, there seems to be no Room at all left for Perswasion; and the Suggestions of our Nature, one would imagine, should anticipate the Force of any enticing Words of Exhortation, in the Pursuit of whatever may be good and profitable to us, and in the rejecting what-

ever is hurtful and prejudicial. Yet continual Experience evinces, how palpably Men act against their highest Interest; and how strongly our Affections, the Tendency of which is to the Attainment of Happiness in general, prompt us to the Prosecution of sinful Objects, at the same time that we cannot but be sensible upon the least Recollection, that nothing brings upon us more certain and substantial Misery.

THE Sensualist in his cooler Thoughts cannot but condemn those Vices as odious, which through the Heat of Desire, he acts over with so much Greediness; and could he but so regulate his Affections, as to submit them to the constant Guidance of his Reason, Vice would ever appear equally detestable; and the Danger and Baseness of Sin would fill his Mind with such glaring and affecting Apprehensions of its Nature and Consequences, that he would live in an habitual Fear and Shame of falling into the Commission of it.

THE Holy Scripture is very large and frequent, in describing Sin under every Character and Allusion, that may provoke

voke our Detestation and Abhorrence: Thus, for Instance, the Continuance in a State of Sin is called *walking in the Night, the being in a State of Darknefs*; Circumstances full of Horror and Uncertainty, Confusion and Danger: *Awake out of Sleep, and awake to Righteousness*, says the Apostle, intimating that Sin is a State of Sleep, a State of Insensibility and Delusion.

BUT we need not go on to recount all the Particulars, wherein the Sacred Writings express the wretched Condition of Sin; the Words before us will be found to take in the whole Argument: For here the Apostle, under the Allegory of a Service, is shewing the Reasonableness of performing our Duty in the most entire and chearful Obedience, and this is the Amount of his Reasoning: *While we were under the Slavery of Sin, we yielded our Members Servants of Iniquity unto Iniquity*; i. e. we gave up ourselves to fulfil every Lust and Affection; but being made free from that, and admitted into another Service, viz. that of Religion, we ought to *yield our Members*

Servants of Righteousness unto Holiness; i. e. with the same Fidelity and sincere Submission, we ought to satisfy the Duties of Pure and Holy Living : And this will appear much more reasonable, if we reflect upon the different Characters, wherein these Services stand recommended us : The service of God is truly lovely and beneficial ; we thereby have our Fruit unto Holiness, and our End everlasting Life : But, on the contrary, the Service of Sin is unfruitful, it is scandalous, it is destructive ; and for Proof thereof, the Apostle appeals even to the Experience and Sentiments of those who have been engaged in that Service : What Fruit had ye then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the End of those things is Death.

Now the only Circumstances which are the true Grounds of Hatred, are either the Mischief which we do, or may receive from, or the inherent Foulness and Ugliness of the Objects, towards which we exercise this Affection : And how eminently these Circumstances agree with Sin ; with what Fulness of Truth and

and Justice they are set forth in the Words of the Text, it may be worth our while, in the following Discourse, to consider. And here, as was observed before, we find Sin represented to us under three Characters.

I. IT is unfruitful ; *what Fruit had ye then of those things.*

II. IT is shameful ; *whereof ye are now ashamed.*

III. IT is destructive ; *the End of those things is Death.*

1st. THEN, Sin is unfruitful ? *What Fruit had ye then in those things ?*

What Fruit ? i. e. what Profit, what Advantage had ye then of those Things then, even at the Time when ye were engaged in the Service of Sin ?

THE only Circumstance, which Sin has to boast of, is present Enjoyment : And if even this Quality be found not to consist with Sin, then the whole Amiability of it is entirely lost and removed. Now if we consider Sin in a general View, it has been so far from providing for the

Welfare of the World, that it has been productive of all the Calamities which Mankind has ever felt : It first introduced Misery into the World ; and not content, through our first Parents, to entail Afflictions upon all the Generations of Men, it goes on to load us with Variety of fresh Plagues. The necessary Tendency indeed of Sin is Misery ; but besides those Punishments, which most Vices draw down upon us by their natural and immediate Consequences, all the severe Judgments of the Almighty might have been entirely spared, had not the Sin of Man made such Afflictions absolutely necessary. For an Instance of this, we may look up to the most terrible Judgment, that, since the Fall, was ever executed upon the World ; when, in the Mightiness of his Wrath, God opened the Windows of Heaven, and broke up the Fountain of the great Deep, and destroyed both Man and Beast from the Face of the Earth by a general Deluge. The Reason of this heavy Displeasure is expressly said in the Holy Scriptures to have been the Wickedness of Man, be-
cause

cause it was exceeding great, and the Thought of every Imagination of his Heart was only evil continually.

THE same Reason extends to Nations and Cities ; Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem and Babylon, owe their Destruction entirely to the Wickedness of their Inhabitants : For when the Contagion of Vice hath generally spread among a People, so that the prevailing Practices ascend up to God as a Sacrifice of Abomination ; when the publick Outrages of clamorous Impiety call for immediate and exemplary Vengeance, then can the Almighty's Fury be no longer stopp'd, but Destruction overwhelms 'em in the midst of their Iniquities, and, in the Violence of God's Indignation, they are wiped away from under Heaven.

PRIVATE Calamities are not indeed in so stated and direct a Manner the Effects of God's Wrath, but they are all the Offspring of Sin : God never afflicts his Creatures willingly ; Peace, Wealth, and Prosperity are the Blessings which the Goodness of the Holy One would choose to indulge us with, if our own Perverseness

ness would not turn them into Curses : And however Afflictions, under our present Circumstances, may serve many deep and exalted Purposes of God's Providence, yet the Malignity of our Sins it is that makes such severe Remedies the necessary Physick of our distemper'd Souls.

UPON this general View then, we find that Sin is not only unfruitful, but mischievous; nor will a particular View tend at all to its Advantage. But however some Persons may vainly fancy, that amidst this general Disorder, they may, by their Sins, come to a larger Share of worldly Riches, Honour and Pleasure, than a Life of Virtue could probably procure, (as Plunderers are generally great Gainers by Publick Calamities) yet if the most happy Man in an earthly Notion, which this World could ever boast of, was to take a Retrospect of his Life, he would find a vast Disproportion between the Satisfaction he receives, and the Evil he sustains from Sin; for all the Evil he does sustain, is from Sin in general.

BUT moreover, the transitory and uncertain Nature of sinful Delights, are
Circum-

Circumstances which would deter a wise Man from making them his Hope and Confidence ; and besides, at the very best, the fullest Enjoyments of them are but Vanity, large in Expectation, low and trifling in Fruition ; so that Desire and Disappointment make up the Whole of a Sinner's Life.

THE Character given of Man in his Primitive State is this, that *God made Man upright*, a Being perfect in his Kind ; all his Faculties were well contrived to act in a regular and harmonious Subordination ; and by acting according to that Disposition, the Dignity of our Nature can only be preserv'd, and therein the Perfection and Happiness of our Being do entirely consist : But on the contrary, the Dethronement of our Reason by Sin, infers the Confusion of rebellious Passions, and all the corroding Cares of Self-contradicting Appetites ; so that however happy the outward Man may seem in the Abundance of Wealth and Honour and sensual Enjoyments, that Happiness is too slight and superficial to affect his Soul ; Tumult and Disorder rage
within

within ; and after all our earnest Longings, after all our painful Endeavours to gratify the prevailing Passions, Emptiness and Dissatisfaction will ever be the Result of our Desires ; a little more Honour, a little more Wealth, a little more Enjoyment, will always be the uppermost in our Thoughts, and we shall be forced upon the continual Pursuit of fresh Cares and Uneasinesses, to relieve us from our former Vanities : So that a wicked Course of Life is full of ungrateful Remembrances and uncomfortable Prospects ; anxious and tumultuous, *like the troubled Sea, which cannot rest, whose Waters throw up Mire and Clay* : And in this Hurry of unfruitful Labours and Pursuits, does the Sinner cut himself off, from all that Complacency of Mind, which Innocence inspires, all those vigorous and pleasurable Enjoyments, which Virtue affords, and particularly from the glorious Hope of that perfect Consummation and Bliss, which will be the eternal Lot and Portion of the Righteous.

WHERE then is this boasted Advantage of present Enjoyment ? What Fruit, what

what Profit can there be in Sensual Delights ? Present indeed they are, but Vanity is likewise present with them, and Misery is their immediate Attendant : And what Fruit can there be in Vanity ? and what Profit can be reaped where Misery is the Purchase ?

BUT we proceed now, *2dly*, to consider the Shamefulness of Sin ; *wherof ye are now ashamed.*

OUR first Parents had no sooner polluted their Souls by Sin, than they endeavoured to hide themselves from God, affraid to behold the Jealousy of offended Majesty, ashamed to appear in the Presence of perfect Purity : *I heard thy Voice in the Garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself,* said Adam, after he had transgressed : *I was afraid, because I was naked, and hid myself ;* Innocence was before their Cloathing, and under the graceful Ornaments of that beauteous Garb, they might with Joy have presented themselves before their Great Creator. But how shall they now appear ? what Covering shall they now seek, to veil the offensive Stains of their
black

black Pollution, from the Pure and All-searching Sight of Him, in whose Eyes *the Heavens themselves are not clean*? How shall they now appear? What frightful Scenes of Horror must they now conceive? What must they not conceive? How must the affecting Sense of their base Deformity, break forth into utter Confusion of Face, and severe Anguish of Soul? How must Shame, Dread and Despair overwhelm them? Odious and ugly as they were, well might they endeavour to fly God's Holy Presence; well might they endeavour, if possible, to fly their very selves; but guilty Shame will still haunt them, and within their own Breasts will they carry the hated Source of their Misery and Vileness.

WITH such Apprehensions doubtless, did the Consciousness of Sin possess our first Parents: And were we but less familiarized to the Commission of it, we should have much more quick and lively Conceptions of its filthy and debasing Nature. The Apostle expresses himself here by the Terms, *whereof we are now ashamed*; because he addresses himself to those,

those, who, having indeed been under the Slavery of Sin, had now submitted to the Christian Dispensation, and did, from their Heart obey the Purity of that Doctrine, which was delivered to them in the Holy Gospel, and consequently to those who did not form their Judgments of what is base and dishonourable by the corrupted Taste of worldly Men. And could we but persuade ourselves to think coolly, and to consider Sin abstractedly from the false Glosses which our mistaken Fancy, and its own Deceitfulness bedecks it with, we also should be ashamed, that it should be ever so much as named among us. We are told in the Holy Scripture, that we were *created in God's Image*, a State certainly of all other the most exalted and honourable that can be conceived: And it is but very obvious arguing to infer, that a State of Sin, which is most contrary to the former, must be the most low and dishonourable. It was Sin that blacken'd an Angel of Light into a Devil; and our being like Satan in Sin it is, thereby we shall also become like him in Vileness and Misery.

This then is the great Debasement of our Nature ; and all the Weaknesses and Imperfections of our Being are Titles of Honour, when compared with the Depravity and Corruption of Sin. The very first Notion of it, is a Transgression of God's Law, by Obedience to which Law, our Dignity and Happiness can only be preserved and advanced. The Malignity of it is so great, that it poisons the whole Man, and debases the Soul in every Faculty. The Degeneracy of our Understanding and the Depravity of our Will, argue the greatest Instances of Meanness and Corruption. The Submission of our Reason to our inordinate Passions and base Affections, consigns us over to the vilest and most wretched Slavery, and sinks us into all the Filth and Impurity of sensual Guilt.

BUT the Baseness and shameful Nature of Sin, will perhaps better appear from considering the Deformity of particular Sins : And here, not to branch out into many Particulars, as the Apostle comprizes our whole Duty under the three Heads of *living godly, righteously*
- *and*

and soberly in this present World ; i. e. Piety, or our Duty to God ; Justice, or our Duty to our Neighbour ; and Sobriety, or our Duty to ourselves : So, on the contrary, the Breaches of these Duties may serve as a summary Division of Sin, namely Impiety, Injustice, and Intemperance.

BUT here it must be remark'd, that in taking a View of Sin in general, the Nature, and not the different Degrees of it, fall properly under Observation ; so that it is but doing Justice to the Argument, to consider each Branch of this Division in the highest Degree. And first, of Impiety : Our Duty to God must arise from the Sense of those Benefits we have already receiv'd from Him, or from our Dependance upon Him for a Supply of those things we do, or shall want. He can have no tolerable Apprehension of our Relation to God, as He is our Creator and Preserver, who is not sensible, that our Breach of Duty to Him, is made up of the highest Ingratitude and Pride ; Qualities, of all other, tending to make Men most base and despicable. It is impossible to conceive a more vile and un-

generous Piece of Behaviour, than that of a Creature employing every Act of its Power to the Dishonour of his Creator, from whose entire Liberality he receives his All. And never sure does Man render himself so contemptible, as when, in the Arrogance of his Ignorance and Weakness, he magnifies himself against the most exalted Majesty. To see a Worm turning upon Omnipotence, and displaying its rash and impotent Folly in reviling and affronting Him, who, at his Pleasure, can *scatter the Nations of the World like Dust before the Wind*: To hear him, whose *Wisdom is Folly, and who is crushed before the Moth*, cavilling at the Works, and correcting the Contrivances of Infinite Power and Wisdom; blaspheming his eternal King, unthankfully disclaiming all former Obligations, and desperately throwing up all future Dependence upon that Being, by whose Bounty he subsists, and who, by a Word, could cast him into an Eternity of Torments, is a Scene full of Folly, Baseness, and Deformity: And however the Frequency of neglecting and dishonouring God,

God, may take off from the odious Appearance of it, yet this is no other than the true Character of every profane and impious Person.

BUT, 2^{dly}, Injustice likewise carries with it all the Marks of Meanness and Ugliness. It is Justice which keeps the World from running wild, and Men from preying upon one another like Beasts: And what Brand of Infamy can be thought too black for him to bear, who does all which in him lies, to overthrow that good Order and Decency, whereby every Man's Property is secured to himself? Generosity and Good-nature are Qualities, which above all other engage Mens Affections; and by the most obvious Rule of Contraries, Injustice must most eminently provoke our Detestation and Abhorrence.

THE two Species of Injustice, are Oppression and Fraud; and it is below the Dignity of rational Creatures to oppress the weaker Side, and to lay Claim to what we have no Right, because Force can bear us out in it. Brutes may use their Strength to such ungenerous Pur-

poses ; and to seize the whole Spoil, because those who ought to divide, cannot contest it by bare Dint of Power, is an Action well enough suited to the Character of a Lion : But the Man who submits to such Baseness is unworthy the Name of a Man. And as to Fraud, which is the other Sort of Injustice, that is a Quality of no less Disgrace ; and no Returns of Shame and Ignominy are too great to be cast on him that condescends to be crafty and tricking in his Dealings. To lay in wait to deceive, to make use of the Frankness and Generosity of other Peoples Temper to defraud and circumvent them, to be continually acting in Disguise, and, under the Shew and Profession of Friendship, to be contriving Mischief and Dishonesty, are Acts of such flagrant Vileness, that a Man of common Morality, and much more a Christian, would scorn to be concern'd in them.

3^{dly}, INTEMPERANCE is likewise greatly odious and filthy : That Man must strangely have forgot the Dignity of his Nature, that can entirely disregard his Soul, and esteem the Necessaries of his

his viler Part the only Enjoyments of his Being ; that can reject the exalted Perceptions of Divine and Spiritual Joys, and relish nothing higher than the Pleasures of the Beasts that perish. It is a low Debasement indeed to make no other Use of our thinking Faculties than to consider what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and daily to act over the loathsome Scene of plunging ourselves into the Filthiness of Sensuality, and, like Dogs returning to their Vomit, loading ourselves with fresh Oppressions of Riots and Intemperance.

T H E R E is nothing but Shape to distinguish a sensual Man from a Beast : His Soul is render'd entirely brutal, and, in this Respect, he is below the vilest Brutes : They act up to their Nature ; he forgets and debases the Dignity of his : He was made little lower than the Angels, and base it is for such an one to grovel in earthly Satisfaction. *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, is a Maxim calculated for the Practice of Swine ; but vile it is for Men, who have nobler Aims in view, to busy themselves in

pampering and gratifying these frail and fleshly Tabernacles, while they are permitted to be Candidates for Heaven; *and by purifying themselves, even as God is pure*, have the Promise of those Divine Joys, which are the Portion of blessed Saints and Angels, in the blissful Regions of Eternity.

IF then Sin upon this View appears thus base and detestable, how heartily asham'd must those Persons be of having committed it, who have since possessed their Souls with the Power of Godliness, and form'd their Minds into the entire Love and Approbation of Pure and Divine Virtue? Religion fills our Souls with the deepest and most affecting Sense of the black Malignity and intimate Pollution of Sin: And to do what we must immediately repent of; to enter into a Course of Life, where Sorrow and Confusion of Face must be the Result of our Actions, betrays great Folly and Forgetfulness of our own Interest: And yet if this godly Shame, this utter Abhorrence be not wrought in our Souls, the Consequence will be infinitely worse; for

as we must consider in the third and last Place, Sin is destructive ; *for the End of those Things is Death.*

It has pleased Almighty God to enrich us with Faculties susceptible of everlasting Happiness, and to propose to our future Enjoyments the most blissful and adorable Objects. Now to quit all Pretensions to this glorious Inheritance, to knit our Affections to this lower Orb, and to cleave to the Dust of the Ground, are Acts of desperate Folly : But if we be so weak, as to become regardless of our Interest, the Sense of our Danger surely might awaken us. And we have all the Assurances Scripture can give us, that the Consequence of Sin is not only the Loss of Heaven, but likewise the suffering an Eternity of Torments. *The Wages of Sin are Death* : Death is strictly due to our Demerits : Such a Recompence does the vile Corruption of our Transgressions greatly deserve, and such will the just Wrath of Almighty God largely deal out to us. And here by Death is not meant an entire Extinction of us in the Grave, but a State of dreadful and eter-

nal Punishments ; not only an utter Exclusion from Heaven, (for impossible it is that a Sinner should be admitted into God's Presence, or if he could be admitted, impossible it is for a Sinner to take any Satisfaction in the Company of Saints and Angels, since his vitiated Taste cannot partake of their Happiness, nor relish these Rivers of Pleasure which they drink of) but it means a Confinement over to everlasting Burnings in Hell.

AND the Proof of this is so very plain and obvious from Holy Scripture, that two or three Texts put together, from among the many Passages, which lie scattered in every Part of those sacred Writings, may serve to remind us of its Certainty : There we are told, that *the Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Idolaters, and Liars, and whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, where they shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone ; and they shall have no Rest Day nor Night ; and the Smoke of their Torments will ascend up for ever and ever.* Thus then
 having

having considered the unfruitful and shameful Nature, and the destructive Consequence of Sin ; The most natural Inference that can be drawn, is to exhort you to raise in your Minds such a deep and affecting Sense of its Danger and Malignity, as may secure you from being drawn aside, and hardened through the Deceitfulness of it ; for its Deceitfulness alone it is, that can draw us aside : Sin never makes Profelytes in its own natural Complexion ; it is forced to hide its Foulness with every specious Shew of Profit or Pleasure, and captivates our Souls with every insinuating Art of subtil Guile.

BUT all those Glosses can never take off from its Nature ; and here we may appeal to Experience. A Sinner, before the Commission of any Sin, through the Warmth of eager Imagination feeds upon the lovely Prospect of Pleasure and Felicity ; but after Commission, the Shame of betray'd Virtue, the Fear of offended Omnipotence, and the Affliction of disappointed Appetites, quite distract and confound him ; and then, Sin is as nau-
seous,

scious, as it appear'd before delightful : Not that any Alteration is thereby made in the Nature of Sin, but our own misguided Notions are rectified and convinced by Experience, how false its Appearances of Satisfaction are, but how real its Vileness and Malignancy ; for Sin is equally odious and detestable in all Circumstances, and is the same before and after Commission. The same Wine that is red, which gives its Colour, and sparkles in the Cup, does likewise bite like a Serpent, and sting like an Adder. The same Paths which lie so thickly covered with every engaging Appearance of Delight, are covered likewise with Traps and Snares, leading us on to the Destruction, and going down to the Chambers of Hell.

IF what is ugly and mischievous then, can provoke our Hatred and Abhorrence, here let us turn the keenest of our Resentments. Sin deserves the Whole of Detestation ; its Beauty and Pleasure ought to enhance our Aversion, since all its Beauty is Falshood, all its Pleasures substantial Mischiefs. Let Sin therefore
appear

appear in any Shape ; let it address the darling Affections of our Souls, and seem to fall in with the natural Frame and Constitution of our Being ; let it come recommended by the prevailing Fashion of the Times, or the powerful Example of the Rich and Mighty ; yet still the Baseness of it should make us ashamed ; the Danger of it should make us afraid to commit it.

THE Objects of worldly Contempt and Hatred are Poverty and Weakness : But God, *whose Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, hath a Regard to the low and despised Estate of the Godly, and beholdeth the Sinner afar off* : And if our Sentiments did but take their Measures from Truth and Justice, Sin alone would fill our Souls with Indignation. Virtue, tho' cloath'd in Rags, and greatly depressed in Fortune and Condition, is truly honourable ; but Vice, though never so highly exalted in Station, and enrich'd with Abundance of Wealth, and *faring sumptuously every Day*, is but Scandal and Vanity at the best ; its Enjoyments are Shame and Emptiness, and its End is eternal Destruction.

SERMON

2 E R M O N



S E R M O N XII.



J O B xxviii. 28.

And unto Man He said; the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, is Understanding.



WISDOM and Understanding are to the Soul what Meat and Drink are to the Body; and Man's Appetites for the former, are naturally as universal and intense, as for the latter. Accordingly we find with what Closeness of Thought, and Application of Industry, Mankind in general pursues Knowledge; and in what Esteem those

those Persons are held in the World, who have been at all successful in their Pursuits ; those, for Instance, who have made a more narrow Scrutiny, and produced more enlarged Discoveries of natural Things and Causes in the material World ; or those, who have sunk deeper than ordinary in the abstracted Niceties of those Sciences, which relate to the Spiritual and Moral World ; or those again, who by History and Conversation and Business have improved in Political Knowledge, and with some Exactness understand what we call Men and Manners.

BUT among these various Pursuits after Wisdom ; amidst the many Searches and Researches, wherein the Men of Speculation and Business have been ever labouring, but continue ever dissatisfied and bewilder'd, they may with great Fairness and Reason put this Question of Holy Job to themselves ; *Where shall Wisdom be found, and where is the Place of Understanding ?* The Answer to which we are likewise furnish'd with from the same sacred Writer ; *The Fear of the Lord*

Lord, that is Wisdom ; and to depart from Evil, is Understanding.

IT is usual in Holy Writ to express the Whole of Religion by some eminent Part of it. Both these Terms, *viz. the Fear of God, and departing from Evil*, are intended, tho' Branches only, to declare the Whole of our Duty ; and Religion is here call'd the true, the only true Wisdom of Man : For indeed the Knowledge and Practice of that alone, doth denominate a Man truly wise ; but without it, all other Sciences are mere Vanity and Emptiness, all other Knowledge but foolish Amusements and pompous Ignorance.

IN order therefore to establish what is here asserted, I shall endeavour,

I. To enforce the Belief of the Proposition itself from these Words,
Unto Man He said.

And,

II. To prove the Truth of the Proposition more directly, by shewing in what Respects, Religion is justly stiled true Wisdom.

I *st*, THEN,

1st, THEN let us endeavour to enforce the Belief of the Proposition itself from these Words, *Unto Man He said.*

RELIGION is Human Wisdom ; it is that which belongs to a Man, as a Man ; it is that which the All-wise and good God, who gave us these strong Appetites for Knowledge and Understanding, proposeth to us for the correspondent Object and compleat Satisfaction of those Appetites. God, who knoweth perfectly what is in Man, and weigheth all things in the exactest Balance of Justice and Harmony, hath made Religion Man's entire Business, qualifies him for attaining a sufficient Knowledge of it, and enables him to act conformably to such Knowledge.

BUT this will appear more evidently, from considering that Religion lies level to every Man's Capacity. All other Parts of Learning require a peculiar Genius for their Attainment ; and a tolerable Advance in any Sort of worldly Wisdom, is consequent only upon such great natural Abilities, as very few Persons are enrich'd with : And after all the flow
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and tedious Deductions, the great Pains and Fatigues, the many irksome Watchings, the laborious, and most of them useless, Searches, whereby even a slender Stock of worldly Learning is attain'd by Men of the best Parts : There ever remain great Dissatisfactions and Perplexities upon the Mind : Confused Guesses and bare Probabilities make up by far the greatest Part of what they know : And as small as the Sum is, of what they can be supposed to understand, it is beset with wonderful Difficulties and Uncertainties. So true are the Observations of the wisest and most learned of the Sons of Men upon this Subject : *To know Wisdom, i. e. worldly Wisdom, is to know Madness and Folly ; this is likewise Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. In much Study is much Weariness ; and he that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth Sorrow.* But Religious Knowledge, as it is what every one ought to be informed of, so it is what every one may be inform'd of : Here are no vast Qualifications previously necessary, to prepare the Soul for Divine Truths. Some Tempers indeed, it must

be confess'd, are better disposed by Nature to receive and improve by the Precepts of Christianity, than others ; but the good Seed of the Gospel, will spring up and yield its Fruits of Encrease in every Heart, that will receive and cherish it ; and every Heart may receive and cherish it : For nothing can be more simple and easy, more obvious and general than this one plain Method of Cultivation, which the Gospel enjoins ; viz. *That of receiving the Kingdom of Heaven as little Children*, with the same docile Humility, wherewith Children receive Instructions ; with the same tractable Meekness, wherewith Children obey those Instructions ; with the same likewise must every Christian learn his Duty, and obey the Precepts of it. The Men of the most exalted and refined Parts must submit to become Babes in Christian Knowledge, before they can make any Improvement in it : They must be content to give up the Pride of their natural Reason, the Conceit of their worldly Learning, and, in true Poverty of Spirit, lay a Foundation for the Riches of the Gospel : But
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at the same time, the Men of the lowest Capacity, upon the same easy Terms of being desirous to learn, and willing to obey, tho' they can never, by all the Parts and Application they are Masters of, arrive above the State of Babes in any other Sort of Knowledge, may, and do, nevertheless, in the Knowledge of Christ Jesus, arrive at the Fulness of Stature and Maturity. Add to this, that the Truths of the Christian Religion are of a Nature most sublime and recondite : The highest Efforts of human Reason, could never of themselves attain to a tolerable Knowledge of any, nor to any Perception at all of most of them ; yet in the Holy Scriptures they are so plainly reveal'd, and by the Assistances of the Blessed Spirit, they are so readily attainable, that the very meanest in Understanding can sufficiently know them, and the weakest in Abilities can, with honest and acceptable Sincerity, perform them. In short, it is not in every Man's Power to be a great Politician, a learned Philosopher, a profound Reasoner, an eloquent Orator, &c. but it is in every Man's

Power to be a knowing and a good Christian. The Objects of Religious Wisdom are so spiritually pure, so exaltedly glorious, that the most elevated Genius may for ever exercise itself therein, with Rapture and Delight ; but withal, they are so condescending and diffusive in their Brightness, that every, the lowest Capacity, may attain unto them.

SINCE therefore it hath pleased Almighty God, to propose Religion to us for our Wisdom ; since the Soul of Man is by Nature rendered more capable of receiving spiritual Knowledge, than any Part of human Learning whatever ; since Divine Truths may be universally learn'd by all Mankind (they being that heavenly Manna, which satisfieth every Eater, and tempereth itself to every Man's Liking) since they are so proportioned to every one's Capacity, that he who hath the greatest natural Sense and Abilities, hath in Religious Wisdom nothing over ; and he that hath the least of the former, with respect to the latter, hath no Lack ; it is but necessary
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to conclude, that Religion is the highest and truest Wisdom of Man.

PARTICULAR and accidental Instances of Knowledge are too confined to be made the Standard of human Wisdom : Something general must be sought after, which may include our whole Species ; some universal Qualification, which may adorn every Station, and suit every Capacity ; something which may exceed our Reason in its brightest Efforts, and fall in with its faintest Glimmerings ; and such Religion hath been shewn to be.

THE Almighty hath made this Choice for us, and we ought to esteem it the best Choice : For whenever we take upon us to choose for ourselves, the Calamities we shall feel in Consequence, will sufficiently convince us of our own Rashness, and teach us that our true Wisdom is to be guided and directed solely by Him, who is Wisdom itself.

THIS was the Case of our first Parents ; they continued happy, as long as they continued in that State of Wisdom, wherein the Almighty placed them ; but no sooner did they seek to become Wise in

2dly, To prove the Truth of this Assertion more directly; by shewing in what Respects Religion may be justly stiled true Wisdom.

WERE we to take Religion throughout in a comparative View, it would be no difficult Matter to discover, how vastly superior it is to every Instance of human Wisdom, nay, to all human Wisdom whatever, both in its Nature and in its several Circumstances. The chief Object of Religious Wisdom is God himself; and with what exalted Ideas doth the Knowledge of Him fill the Soul? In what glorious Scenes of Action doth the Service of Him engage our Performances? Human Wisdom is conversant about finite Objects, and they bespeak Contraction of Views, and narrow Spheres of acting: Men of Learning are apt to boast their Fields of Knowledge; but what is the Survey of a few confined Inclosures, to the boundless Prospects of Eternity? Human Wisdom is clouded with Uncertainties; every Step we take perplexes us, every thing we meet with puzzles us. Religious Wisdom is infallible;

lible ; there we see things before us with
 Certainty, and tread on with Safety ;
 there Certainty encreases on us, as we
 look forwards, and our Paths become as
 a shining Light, *which shineth more and
 more, until the perfect Day.* Human
 Wisdom is not of so high Importance to
 us ; it doth not necessarily affect our chief
 Happiness. Religious Wisdom is the
 proper Business and Employment of our
 whole Lives, the End and Design of our
 Living in this World, and the Means of
 our Eternal Happiness, in that which is
 to come. It would be endless to com-
 pare them in every Particular ; the gene-
 ral Rules of judging of true Wisdom will,
 at present, serve to shew in what Respects
 Religion may justly deserve that Cha-
 racter. Now Wisdom in general, is the
 pursuing a right End by the properest
 Means for its Attainment : But Religion
 teaches us to pursue incomparably the
 best of Ends, by the best Means for the
 Attainment of that End ; and that it
 doth so, we shall perceive, by consider-
 ing Religion in those two Respects, which
 the Definition, given of Wisdom, sug-
 gests

gests unto us ; viz. the Wisdom of the End, and the Wisdom of the Means : Both these Parts are necessary to denominate a Man truly Wise ; and both these Parts do most eminently concur in our most Holy Religion.

1st, THEN, Religion is the true Wisdom of Man, because it proposes to him the best of Ends : It proposes to us the immortal Enjoyment of infinite Glory and Happiness in the highest Heavens : It proposes to us an intense Fruition of the Almighty in the beatifick Vision, and as near a Resemblance of Him as our Natures will allow ; a glorious Inheritance with the Blessed Saints in Light, and a rapturous Perception of all Kinds of Spiritual Delights, in the blissful Regions of Eternity. Now if we compare these Proposals, to those which this World offers to its Votaries, for the End of their Pursuits ; how palpable is their Folly, who are content to move in this lower Sphere of Vanity and Misery ; who choose to confine their Affections to the Grossness, their Views to the Narrowness of Earthly and Material Objects ?

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LET then the Invention of Learned Men be upon the Stretch, to open every Treasure of human Wisdom, and to discover all its Stores ; let them dig into the Bowels of the Earth, and determine the Bounds of the Ocean ; let them accompany the Heavens in their Motions, and *call the Stars all by their proper Names* ; let them dive into the Hearts of Men, and lay infinite Schemes of Management and Contrivance ; let them declare what Ornaments their many Sciences are to human Understanding ; how useful their many Arts are, to our present Well-being : Yet what is all this, considered barely as Human, in comparison of Religious Wisdom, but transitory Amusements, carried on with Labour, and ended in Vanity ? These Attainments are only so many gilded Bubbles to him, who hath Eternity in view ; who hopes to become an Heir of Salvation in the Resurrection of the Just, and to be admitted into the perfect Fruition of those eternal and immense Pleasures, *which Eye cannot as yet see, nor Ear hear, nor Heart conceive.*

IF then substantial and never-fading Enjoyments, if the exalted Satisfaction of Divine Entertainments, and the Joys of the Blessed Saints and Angels, be incomparably the noblest End, that Man can pursue ; and if Religion teaches us to pursue this End, then must Religion, with respect to the End, be confessed the true Wisdom of Man.

BUT in vain is the best End proposed without proper Means to attain it. Let us therefore in the second Place consider Religion in that other Respect, and discover how it makes Men Wise with respect to the Means.

NOW the Means which Christianity proposes for our arriving at Heaven, are those Doctrines of Faith, those Precepts of Holy Living, which are contain'd in the Gospel. And that these are the properest Means of our Arrival thither, is evident, not only from Scripture, because they are every where laid down and enjoin'd by God, as such ; by God, who is the sole Author of everlasting Life, and consequently whatever He pleases to annex thereunto, as the Condition of it,

we must chearfully submit to as the best, the necessary, the only Means of receiving it : But it may be, in some measure likewise confirm'd to us from Reason, because those Means do, in their own Nature, conduce to make us meet Partakers of the End propos'd : Our Duty grows up into our Happiness ; and the Precepts of Christian Holiness have, through God's Grace, a direct Tendency to exalt us to Heavenly Glory. That Brightness of Devotion, that Fervour of Charity, that Purity of Temperance which the Gospel inspires, that beautiful Simplicity, that harmonious Lustre which Christian Precepts shed over all our Actions, enrich us with such Heavenly Holiness, and fill the Soul with so Divine a Complacency, that, were we not perswaded of the Certainty of Eternal Happiness, we might be apt to mistake the Means of Religion for the End of it, and embrace the Precepts of Christianity for its Rewards. The more intelligent Part of the Heathen World, tho' they had very dark Intimations of a future State, placed Man's Wisdom in the Knowledge and Practice
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of right Reason and moral Virtue : And what is our most Holy Religion, but right Reason brightened and improved by Revelation, and moral Virtue refin'd and sanctified by Divine Grace ? And what the wiser Heathens chose to do without Hope, we ought certainly to esteem, much more our Wisdom and Interest to perform, in the glorious Prospect of so exalted a Blessedness. Since then the Tempers of Christian Holiness are so strongly connected with the Happiness of Heaven ; since those Tempers are in themselves such bright Accomplishments, such enobling Excellencies of human Nature ; since the Precepts of the Gospel lead on regularly to the blessed End of our Being, and do, all the Way, recommend themselves likewise to us on their own Account, does not our most Holy Religion come up to its intended Character in that other Respect ? And do not both the End it proposes, and the Means it enjoins, make up the true, the only true Wisdom of Man ?

It was mentioned before, that Wisdom in general is what we have all a
natural

natural Thirst after : And since we have now discovered wherein true Wisdom is to be found, the Inference is but obvious ; let us make Religion our entire Choice, and the Precepts of it our main Business. As this is a Wisdom absolutely necessary, infinitely beneficial, universally attainable, so the Obligation of it extends to all Mankind ; the highest of the Sons of Men must fall down before it, and the lowest may become large Sharers of its Advantages. Here then let those who are of slender Parts and Attainments in all other Respects, be careful how they repine at their Want of Wisdom, because they may be as truly wise as the wisest of Men, they may *be wise unto Salvation*. Religion will absolutely be found *the one Thing needful* : No one will be rewarded hereafter barely for his great natural Abilities ; no one condemn'd for the Weakness of his Apprehensions : In the main Point, we may all indifferently become Wise, because all indifferently may become Religious, and consequently all indifferently may attain eternal Happiness. On the other Hand, let Men of
bright

bright Parts and high Attainments, be careful how they magnify the Reach of natural Reason, and over-rate the Accomplishments of human Learning in Opposition to, or even in Derogation from the Wisdom of Religion.

It is much more the Duty, it is much more the Glory of a Man, to shine in his moral, than in his natural Capacity: Piety renders us much more like the Divine Being, than the most enlarged and refined Advancements in worldly Knowledge.

WHEN Human Learning is made subservient to Religious Truths; when Beauties of Speech adorn, when Strength of Reason supports, when Clearness of Conception enlightens, when Soundness of Judgment establishes the Doctrines of the Gospel, or, when Arts and Sciences are cultivated for the Glory of God, inasmuch as they advance the present Welfare of Mankind; when they are directed to the serviceable Ends of exercising Man's Industry, of polishing Civil Society, of enlarging our Minds and refining our rational Faculties, of promoting mutual

tual Commerce, and propagating universal Peace and Harmony (provided Religion hath the allowed Superiority, and is therefore prosecuted as our necessary and substantial Wisdom, while those other are assumed only as our present, accidental and superficial Qualifications) : Then indeed Learning is both useful and commendable, and may justly be esteem'd a subordinate and inferior Part of human Wisdom. But when the Pride of Reason would swell into Self-sufficiency ; when the Conceit of Science, falsely so call'd, would exalt itself against our Great Creator ; when the Knowledge of natural and material Objects takes us off from the practical Knowledge of spiritual and divine Doctrines, and the specious Amusements of this World break in upon the important Concerns of the next ; then the deepest Discoveries we can make, are but Emptiness, the brightest Acquisitions are Madness and Folly.

It will ever be an humbling Consideration, that after all our laboured Advances, after all our boasted Progress in Human Learning alone, we have added

VOL. I.

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nothing to our main Happiness ; we must seek after that some other Way, and be content to learn the Wisdom of those whom we at present esteem Fools.

THERE is but one common Passage to Man's highest Happiness, and it is Man's highest Wisdom to pursue it. He who would shape out new Courses, and cut through different Currents, will find Uncertainty to be the Series of his Pursuits, and Misery to be the End of them : Religion is the safe, the only Channel, which can bring us thither, and that flows on directly into the Ocean of Eternal Bliss.

BUT to conclude : What will be the truest Test of Excellency and Defect ; this will finally be determined to be the Case by Him, *who will judge the World in Righteousness*. When, at the last Day, the Wantonness of Wit, the Baseness of Cunning, the Shallowness of Human Penetration, the Emptiness of every learned Amusement, and all the foolish Wisdom of this World shall be set at nought ; Then shall the Almighty exalt the Wisdom of those that fear Him, the Understanding

derstanding of those that depart from
 Evil : He will number them among his
 own Children, and give them a glorious
 Inheritance among his Saints for ever
 and ever. *Amen.*



and every other man among his Sires for ever
own Children, and give them glorious
Life! He will meet them through his
overcoming of those that depart from



S E R M O N XIII.



H E B. ix. 24.

For Christ is not entered into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true ; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us.



IT is the main Business of this Epistle, to set forth the superlative Excellency of the Christian, above the Mosaical Dispensation ; and this is done by an Induction of many Particulars. The Apostle runs through and compares the Ceremonial Services

and Typical Priviledges, delivered under the former Covenant, with the spiritual Devotions and substantial Blessings vouchsafed under the latter ; and endeavours by great Force of Reason and Rhetorick, to raise our Views from the weak and beggarly Elements of the Law, which makes nothing perfect, unto the Power and Riches of the Gospel, which sanctifieth, which justifieth through Faith.

THE *Jewish* Ritual was made up of Precepts entirely of a positive Sort, which had no necessary Connection with, no visible Tendency to promote, but were only figurative Expressions of true Holiness, Shadows only of those good Precepts to come, which shine forth among us in the Beauty and Perfection of Divine Virtue. The legal Sacrifices were the insufficient Sacrifices of Bulls and of Goats ; and impossible it is, that their Blood should be able to take away Sin : But the Blood of the New Covenant, is the Blood of the Holy Jesus ; that immaculate Lamb of God, who by his Death and Sufferings, hath made a full and perfect Atonement for the Sins of
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the whole World ; and by his precious Blood-shedding, hath obtained unto us the Blessings of eternal Life. And as we are thus enriched with the Priviledge of a new and better Covenant, so likewise do we enjoy the Advantage of a new and better Priesthood. The High Priest under the Law, who was appointed to mediate between God and the People, was indeed appointed, according to God's own Institution ; but was a Man in all Respects (bating the Dignity of his Function) upon the Level with those, in whose Behalf he was to mediate. But under the Gospel Dispensation, Jesus Christ is our High Priest, the Son of God, God as well as Man : God, and therefore capable to treat as such with Man ; Man, and therefore capable to treat as such with God. As He was tempted in all Points like as we are ; so He cannot but be sensibly touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities, however He is now exalted above them : But as He was without Sin, so He made Himself a spotless and meritorious Sacrifice for us ; and was such an High Priest as

became us, *i. e.* as was necessary for us under the Circumstances of Sinners; He being *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens*; who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up Sacrifice, first for his own Sins, and then for the Peoples; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself: For the Law maketh Men High Priests, which have Infirmary; but the Word of the Oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. Thus then the Jewish Law was an imperfect Rule, adapted to an imperfect State; Types and Figures only of this better Covenant, necessary to be swallowed in the bright Perfection of the Gospel; to be antiquated and vanish away, when the substantial Glory of the great Anti-types appeared. And as the whole Office, so every particular Branch of Duty, with Respect to the Legal Priesthood, bore a Typical Relation to the Priestly Office, and Character of our Blessed Saviour; They only prefigured to us the Advantages of a divine and heavenly Mediator,

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and exhibited that in Shadow, which the Holy Jesus vouchsafes to enrich us with in Substance. The Words of the Text suggest to us two Instances of this Sort, wherein the carnal Representations of Heavenly Things, under the Law, meet with their true and spiritual Completion under the Gospel. The *Jewish* High Priest, went once every Year into the Holy of Holies : Our Great High-Priest is entered once for all into Heaven. Their High Priest made Intercession for the People, before the Mercy-Seat ; our High Priest makes Intercession for us at God's Right Hand. *Christ*, saith the Apostle, *is not entered into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, there to appear in the Presence of God for us.* The Circumstances therefore, which will furnish out Matter of Reflection, from these Words, agreeably to the Season of the Year, are

I. OUR Blessed Lord's Glorious Ascension into Heaven, expressed in these Words, *Christ is not entered*
into

into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven itself.

And,

II. THE gracious Design of such his Ascension, with Respect to Mankind, expressed in these Words, *that He may appear in the Presence of God for us.*

I. THEN, let us consider, our Blessed Lord's glorious Ascension into Heaven, expressed in these Words, *Christ is not entered into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven itself.* The Manner whereby this our Lord's Ascension was typified under the Law, was briefly this. A certain Season of the Year was set apart for a solemn and general Expiation; at which Time the High Priest, having made an Offering, first for his own Sins, and then for the Sins of the People, took the Blood of the Sacrifice and passed with it into the *Holy of Holies*, a Place separated by a Veil, from the rest
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of the Tabernacle, into which the High Priest alone was permitted to enter, and that only once a Year : There he sprinkled the Blood upon the Mercy-Seat ; and by that Means he made Atonement both for himself and for the People to cleanse them, *that they might be clean from all their Sins before the Lord.* In like Manner, but in a Degree infinitely more exalted and beneficial, did our Great High Priest, after having made a meritorious Sacrifice of Himself for us, pass with his most precious Blood into the highest Heavens, and doth now continually present it before God, as a full and sufficient Atonement for the Sins of the whole World. The Death and Sufferings of our Saviour Christ, were truly and strictly expiatory ; and the shedding forth of his Blood, exempts us from the Punishment, and washes us from the Guilt of Sin : But these Benefits are made more fully and affectingly our own, by his fully performing the other Part of his Priestly Office, *viz.* that of presenting the Merits of his Sufferings before God, and interceding with Him on our Behalf. Our
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Blessed Lord therefore after his Resurrection, having continued some Time upon Earth, giving all necessary Instructions to his Disciples, as He was a Prophet ; and issuing forth all necessary Directions for the settling and governing the spiritual Kingdom of his Church, during this its militant State, as He was King as well as Priest, *a Priest after the Order of Melchisedec*, led his Disciples out to *Bethany*; and while they beheld, He was taken up from them, and a Cloud received Him out of their Sight. Thus we find that our Lord's Ascension was a true and local Ascension ; the same Body which rose from the Dead, did likewise ascend into Heaven : The Disciples indeed, did not actually see Him ascend thither, but they saw his Body raised from the Ground, and moving upwards, 'till He was received by the Cloud : And to add to the Confirmation of this Article, *While they looked stedfastly towards Heaven, as He went up, behold, two Men stood by them in white Apparel ; which also said, Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing unto Heaven ? The same Jesus which is taken*

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ken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like Manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven. And as our Lord thus ascended up in Glory, so does He remain invested with the Fulness of it. The Gates of the Holy Places, *not made with Hands*, lifted up their Heads, and the everlasting Doors of the highest Heavens were lifted up, to give Admission to the King of Glory : In Triumph did He pass through all the intermediate Courts ; was received with the Applauses of the whole Heavenly Host into the immediate Presence of God himself, and sat down at the Right Hand of Majesty on High. He had approved Himself in his Human Nature, *the Lord, strong and mighty*, the Lord, mighty in Ghostly Conflicts, victorious over every Spiritual Enemy. His Human Nature therefore is now very highly exalted, sharing the Glories, and partaking of the Power and Majesty of his Divinity : He hath a Name given Him *above every Name ; that at the Name of Jesus, every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and of Things in Earth, and of Things under the Earth ; Angels and Authorities, and Powers, being made subject*
unto

unto Him. Thus did our Blessed Saviour ascend into *the Holy of Holies*. And shall not we, who are Partakers of Christ's Death and Sufferings, be Partakers also of his Conquests and Triumphs? Yes, assuredly: For, as we come now to consider, in the

2^d PLACE, the happy Effects of our Blessed Lord's Ascension, with Respect to Mankind, He did thus ascend, that He might *appear in the Presence of God for us*; that He might appear in the Presence of God for us; that He might become our Mediator, our Intercessor, our Advocate. For our Sins He hath already fully satisfied; by his Mediation He challenges the Performance of God's Promises for us, consequent upon such his Satisfaction. He hath borne the Weight of the Almighty's Vengeance for us; He now entreats the Riches of his Mercy for us. The Insufficiency of the Legal Sacrifices, was evident from the constant Repetition of them: The one Oblation of Christ once offered, did fully obtain Man's Redemption: But, tho' the Sacrifice was but once made, the Presentment of that before God, in the Holy Place

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not made with Hands, is perpetual. Our Blessed Saviour, who sitteth at the Right Hand of God, does now with Authority continually plead the Merits of that Sacrifice, and our Title to partake of its Benefits. Do we sin, and desire Forgiveness of our Offences? We have an Advocate with the Father, who hath borne the Punishment, and washed away the Guilt of them. Do we want Spiritual Strength to perform our Parts in this Second Covenant? He who stood in the Place of Man to remove the Malediction of the Law, does not stand in the Place of God to confer the Grace of the Gospel. He will impute the Perfection of his Obedience to us, to supply for the defective Sincerity of ours; and through the Influences of his Holy Spirit, will render us, tho' not compleatly, yet acceptably Righteous in the Sight of God. Do we desire Eternal Happiness? the Blessed Jesus hath already purchased it for us; hath taken Possession of it on our Behalf, reserves Mansions for us in those blissful Regions, and facilitates, by every powerful Method of his preventing and assist-
ing

ing Grace, our Arrival thither. Thus fully, thus graciously, does our dear Redeemer discharge the Office of our great High Priest, our Heavenly Intercessor. Good Lord ! how great and unchangeable are the Wonders of his Love ! Notwithstanding our great Unworthiness, yet did He love us. Notwithstanding our ungrateful Returns of stubborn Sin, yet did He continue to love us unto the End. Whatever Character He hath hitherto borne, He hath made it the blessed Instrument of our Happiness : When He humbled Himself and became subject to Shame and Affliction, to Death, *even the Death of the Cross* ; it was all for our Sakes. Now that He is highly advanced in Power and Dignity, it is for our Advantage. In His State of Meanness, He was our Sacrifice ; in the Exaltation of his Glory, He becomes our Advocate : Our Advocate to solicit the Pardon of our Sins, the Acceptance of our Persons, the Supply of our Wants, the Success of our Prayers, the Indulgence of every Blessing ; strengthening and supporting us in all our Necessities, imputing to us the All-sufficiency of his

his own Merits, and interposing with the Fulness of his Favor and Authority on our Behalf. And thus having set forth these two great Articles of Belief, our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, and his Intercession for us at God's Right-Hand, we shall properly employ what remains of this Discourse, in considering what Influences each of these Articles ought to have upon us, in Order to our partaking of the blessed Effects of them. And 1st, Christ himself declared, *that He would go and prepare a Place for us, that where He is, there we might be also. He is admitted into the Resplendency of that Presence in which is Fulness of Joy; is sat down at that Right-Hand, where there are Pleasures for evermore: And He is first Fruits, as of our Resurrection, so likewise of our Ascension into Heaven: And shall we want any Inducement to accompany our dear Redeemer? especially to accompany Him in the Participation of his eternal Glory and Happiness? How ought it to exalt our Faith, and enflame our most ardent Desires, to follow this glorious Captain of our Sal-*

VOL. I. U vation,

vation, this mighty Forerunner of our Happiness? Human Nature, to which the Curse was pronounced of, *Dust thou art, and to Dust shalt thou return*, is now received up into the highest Heavens, and invested with absolute Authority: In Him we ourselves are seated in Heaven; we are there already in Hope; and it is our Business, through God's Grace, to provide, that such our Hope may be hereafter swallowed up in Fruition. As therefore our Great Mediator hath prepared a Place for us; it is necessary, that we prepare ourselves for it: And as in Order to our glorious Resurrection from the Grave, a previous Resurrection from Death of Sin, so likewise in Order to our true and local Ascension into Heaven, a pious Ascension thither in Heart and Mind, is absolutely necessary. While our Affections are kept warm by the promised Glories of that Place, while we esteem our Hope, our Treasure, our Head, our All to be in Heaven, thither will every Thought naturally tend; there will every Wish and Expectation center. We shall look upon ourselves as Strangers
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and Pilgrims only hastening towards our Heavenly *Jerusalem* ; and consequently shall spiritualize every Affection, shake off every Incumbrance of Carnal and Earthly Objects, *and with Patience, with Joy run the Race that is set before us.* Sensuality presses down the Soul, and renders it incapable both of enjoying and aspiring after the Blessedness of Eternity : But the Liveliness of a pure Faith, raises our Views, and invigorates our Endeavours : It pierces even into Heaven itself, and where the Grossness of our fleshly Organs fail us, thither will the Strength of our enflamed Affections carry us : No Difficulty of Duty, no Violence of Temptation will now discourage us, since the Brightness of a glorious Ascension is our promised Portion : This will enflame our Devotion, and quicken our Obedience : We shall do every thing, we shall suffer every thing for the Sake of Christ, upon this comfortable Assurance, that we shall hereafter reign with Him : *For to him that overcometh, saith our Blessed Saviour, will I grant to sit with Me on my Throne ; even as I have overcome*

and am sate down with my Father on his Throne. And that we may thus overcome, the second Article here set forth, viz. that of Christ's Intercession on our Behalf, may greatly serve to convince us; for what Grace and Divine Assistance may we hope, what may we not hope from so Great and Powerful an Intercessor? Our Heavenly Mediator is too sensible of the Tortures He bore for our Sakes, to suffer their Efficacy at last to fail: And if, in the Meanness of his Humiliation, He was found so mighty to redeem, how much more mighty to save must He now be, in the Majesty of his Exaltation? If, by being lifted up upon the Cross, He could draw all Men after Him, how much more powerful must He now be, by being lifted up into Heaven? With Triumph does the Apostle cry out, Who then shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justified, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the Right-Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us: Would we therefore become the Partak-

ers of Christ's Intercession: We must make ourselves the proper Subjects of it; and how the proper Objects of it? The Sincerity of our Desires and Endeavours after Holiness, must make us meet to be the Partakers of Divine Grace; and the Fervency of our Prayers, must recommend such our Sincerity to the Divine Acceptance. Christ's Intercession is not absolute, but conditional; He will not solicit Pardon of Sin for them, who will not repent; He will not beg the Influences of God's Holy Spirit for them, who trample upon the Riches of his Grace; He will not apply the Merits of his Sufferings to them, who crucify Him afresh by their daily Sins; nor become the Author of eternal Happiness to them, which despise the Glories and reject the Offer of so great Salvation. However powerful and effectual Christ's Mediation may be in itself, its Power and Efficacy is quite lost to them who will not obey the Gospel. To believe that the Holy Jesus is our Advocate, and not to render ourselves worthy of such his Advocation, is to destroy the blessed Effects of his Office,

Office, and to turn them to our own Reproach and Condemnation. Again, we must recommend ourselves to the Divine Notice, by frequent and fervent Prayer : It is the Priest's Business not to pray for them, who neglect to pray for themselves, but only to offer up the Prayers of those that ask, and by such Oblation, to render them more effectual : Having indeed so great an High Priest, we may with Boldness and Freedom, come unto the Throne of Grace, and be assured, *that whatever we ask in Christs Name, we shall receive ; but come we must, before we can obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.* We must ask in Christ's Name, disclaiming all Worthiness of our own, putting our whole Trust in his Merits, depending entirely upon his Mediation : Accordingly we see, how wisely and piously our excellent Mother offers up every Collect of the Liturgy in Christ's Name, by inserting at the End of each her firm Confidence in her sole Reliance upon his powerful Intercession : And what the perverse Ignorance of our Dissenters call the disturbing of our Prayers,

Prayers, and the breaking in upon our Devotions, is in Reality, the most acceptable Way of offering them up to God, it is praying according to God's Will ; according to his express Command. But *having so great an High Priest*, do we want, shall we desire, shall we accept any other Intercessors ? The Saints and Angels are not, cannot be our Mediators, and consequently not the proper Objects of our Invocation ; and to pray to them as such, is sacrilegiously to rob Christ of his Mediatorial Power : Lord, we disclaim every other Advocate but Thee, Lord, do Thou hear our Prayers ; Thou that takest the Sins of the World, have Mercy upon us ; Thou that fittest at the Right-Hand of God, have Mercy upon us ; Thou that makest Intercession for us, receive our Prayers : For Thou only art Holy ; Thou only art the Lord ; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, are most high in the Glory of God the Father.

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Prayers, and the breaking in upon our
Devotion; is in Reality, the most accept-
table way of offering them up to God,
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knowing as great as His Price, do we
want, that we desire, shall we accept
any other intercession? The Saints and
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and consequently not the proper Objects
of our invocation; and so pray to them
as being satisfactorily to Job Christ of
his Mediatorial Power: Lord, we do
claim every other Advocate but Thee,
Lord, do Thou answer our Prayers; Thou
thine self the Sins of the World, have
Mercy upon us; Thou that fillest as the
Right Hand of God, have Mercy upon
us; Thou that makest intercession for us,
redeem our Prayers; for Thou only art
Holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou
only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the Glory of God the
Father in sanctified and true hearts
: not least in the way of our prayers
no to pray in the way of
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